

Saskatchewan HISTORY

★ The First Child
Welfare
Conferences

BY

GERTRUDE S. TELFORD

★ Homesteading at
Indian Head

BY

JEAN McC. THOMAS



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Local Government in the North-West Territories

III. THE VILLAGES¹

THE government of urban communities involves problems and conditions not met with in purely rural areas. The closer aggregation of population makes sanitation more important. The nature of the fire hazard necessitates a different method of fire protection. A greater variety of public improvements is usually required or asked for. The more varied sources of income and forms of property permit a more complex revenue system. The North-West Territories Government was well aware of such circumstances when the original system of local government was devised. The *Municipal Ordinance*² provided for the establishment of "town municipalities" for larger communities. For those not large enough to be separated out from the rural municipalities there were provisions which were to enable the councils to meet the special needs of their urban residents. The growth of town municipalities was slow. A number of growing centres discussed it from time to time but only a handful actually decided to incorporate. Furthermore, the movement to form rural municipalities, which had started out bravely in 1884, petered out before it had covered more than a small portion of the Territories.³ The system of fire districts, statute labor districts, etc., which were provided for as an alternative, were designed to meet rural needs only.⁴ As a consequence of these developments the small urban communities were without means to provide for needs which became urgent as soon as they were composed of a dozen or so habitations.

TERRITORIAL REGULATION—The failure of the *Municipal Ordinance* to provide satisfactory means for dealing with the problems of these small settlements led the Territorial Government at first, not to the introduction of an alternative form of local government, but rather to direct regulation. The *Unincorporated Towns' Ordinance* of 1888 made certain provisions applicable to "unincorporated towns" which were defined as any portion of land, not being within a municipality, surveyed into building lots, or any portion of land not exceeding 320 acres, on which not less than twenty buildings had been erected for residence, trade, commerce or manufacture. It prohibited the accumulation of manure, refuse, or any other matter prejudicial to the public health, or any loose material which might catch or spread fire. Swine were not to be kept within seventy feet of houses during the summer and were not to be permitted to run at large at any time. Whether or not so intended, other provisions were applicable without restriction as to location. Householders, hotel and restaurant-keepers, and others

¹ Unpublished manuscript sources used in this article consist of the following:

(1) Microfilm copies of village records in the Archives of Saskatchewan.

(2) Files relating to individual local government units, titled according to the present name and form of unit, in the custody of the Department of Municipal Affairs, Legislative Building, Regina. These are referred to in the footnotes as "Grenfell file," etc.

² Ordinance No. 2 of 1883.

³ See A. N. Reid "Local Government in the North-West Territories, II. The Rural Municipalities" *Saskatchewan History*: Vol. 2, No. 3, pp. 1-14.

⁴ See A. N. Reid "Local Government in the North-West Territories, I. A study of the Beginnings of Rural Local Government, 1883-1905," *Saskatchewan History*: Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 1-13.

were required to dispose of garbage by burning or by placing in covered receptacles which, during the summer, were to be cleaned weekly. Excavations in which foul water accumulated were to be filled in and dangerous excavations were to be covered or fenced. An amendment in 1889 provided more detailed regulations for the prevention of fire. In unincorporated towns there were restrictions on the amount of kerosene that might be stored and on the method of storing. Without limit as to locality there were restrictions on the storage of gun-powder and provision that manure, hay, and straw were not to be used in the construction of buildings within one hundred feet of other buildings.

No evidence has been discovered as to the effectiveness of these regulations but certain inadequacies are obvious. No special machinery was created for their enforcement. This was to be done presumably by the laying of complaints of infractions but no one was charged with any special responsibility for doing this. They were entirely negative in the sense that no provision was made for positive steps which involved the expenditure of money. And finally, they dealt with only a few of the matters with which such communities were concerned.

PROVISION FOR TRUE LOCAL GOVERNMENT—The inadequacies of regulation by the Territorial Government led within a short period to the introduction of a new *Unincorporated Towns' Ordinance* in 1893, which provided for the establishment of units which retained the name "unincorporated town," but which were no longer simply areas in which regulations were to apply.⁵ They were now units enjoying some measure of self-government but their powers were quite limited and the machinery of government was very simple.⁶ The name of such units was altered to "village" in 1895 without any essential change in their nature. In this article the term "village" will be used in regard to such units from their institution in 1893.

The unit provided for was not incorporated and hence had neither the rights nor responsibilities of such status. Real estate could be acquired only by having it vested in the Lieutenant-Governor (after 1900, the Commissioner of Public Works) who was to hold it for the purposes of the village. This was done in regard to nuisance grounds⁷ and cemeteries.⁸ Suits involving the village had to be by representative action: by or against the overseer as representative of the village. The extent of the liability of the village seems to have been rather doubtful. For example, the Deputy Attorney-General in 1901 gave the following

⁵ To deal with settlements where this ordinance did not apply, the *Abatement of Nuisance Ordinance* was passed in 1894. By the latter, somewhat similar regulations concerning fire prevention and public health and safety were made applicable to "villages." These were defined as portions of land, outside municipalities and unincorporated towns, on which there were five or more dwellings or business places. Regulations applicable outside the areas where local government prevailed were continued under the *Village Ordinance* (to be discussed later) from 1897 to 1901, when "hamlets," as small aggregations of population were then called, were subject to the regulations of that ordinance relating to the prevention of fire and disease.

⁶ With minor exceptions the legislative provision for the local government unit discussed in this article are contained in the following ordinances of the North-West Territories: No. 3 of 1893, No. 35 of 1894, No. 17 of 1895, No. 28 of 1896, No. 9 of 1897, Chap. 72 of *Consolidated Ordinances* of 1898, No. 27 of 1898, Chap. 16 of 1899, Chap. 25 of 1900, Chap. 25 of 1901, Chap. 20 of 1903 (1st Sess.), Chap. 23 of 1903 (2nd Sess.), Chap. 7 of 1904. Unless otherwise noted, legislative provisions referred to are contained in these ordinances.

⁷ Deputy Commissioner of Public Works to R. Gwynne, Overseer of Grenfell, June 1, 1904. "Grenfell file."

⁸ A. B. Lander, overseer of Saltcoats, to Deputy Commissioner of Public Works, June 28, 1905. "Saltcoats file."

opinion in regard to a claim for damages for the death of a horse which had fallen into a village ditch ". . . as the village has no corporate existence, the liability, if any, would, I think, attach only to the overseer personally and he would only be liable for negligence in the manner in which he performed his duties."⁹

The unit provided for in 1893 might be established where there were as few as ten dwelling houses within an area not exceeding 320 acres. In 1899 this was changed to fifteen houses within 640 acres and in 1901 to fifteen houses within 1,280 acres. The latter change was made for the benefit of Mormon settlers in southern Alberta.¹⁰

The ordinance contained provisions for the alteration of boundaries and the typical change was enlargement with the growth of the settlement. Occasionally it was reduced, e.g., at Broadview, where the limits described in the proclamation were greater than had been intended.¹¹ A request for enlargement was precipitated sometimes by the need for additional revenue to finance public improvements. Such requests were likely to raise objections from owners of land still used for farming purposes. The Department of Public Works was of the opinion that it was not desirable to include farm land within village limits and to protect the owners of such it required their formal written request before it would permit enlargement.¹²

The system of government was one of direct democracy on the model of the New England "town meeting" and of the Territorial statute labour and fire districts previously mentioned. The ratepayers' meeting made decisions regarding village activities and elected an "overseer" to carry them out. In 1893 the powers of the ratepayers' meeting were quite restricted but in response to practical needs these were extended from time to time. Essentially, however, this system was retained as the basis for the government of the smaller urban communities until the end of the territorial period.

THE BEGINNINGS OF VILLAGE ORGANIZATION, 1893-1897—For some years after 1893 the establishment of villages was purely voluntary and proceeded slowly. Judging by the paucity of newspaper references, the passing of the legislation attracted little attention. The *Saskatchewan Herald* printed a summary of its main provisions but made almost no comment and concluded by saying "it is not likely that Battleford will be in any rush to elect an overseer."¹³ Other communities were not so reluctant and a number of these, mostly on the Manitoba and Northwestern and Canadian Pacific Railway lines, took advantage of the legislation.

The procedure for establishment involved the posting of notices by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council (after 1898 by the Commissioner of Public Works) of intention to proclaim the village established after a period of thirty

⁹ Deputy Commissioner of Public Works to R. Jefferson, overseer of Battleford, June 26, 1901. "Battleford file."

¹⁰ *Regina Standard*, June 5, 1901.

¹¹ "Broadview file."

¹² Deputy Commissioner of Public Works, to W. P. Bate, overseer of Nutana, May 11, 1904. "Saskatoon file."

¹³ *Saskatchewan Herald*, September 8, 1893. Battleford, although one of the oldest settlements in the Territories, did not become a village until 1899.

days. The latter was not to take place, however, if a majority of the ratepayers petitioned against it. In practice, during the first few years, the initiative was left entirely to the local residents. The first community to take steps was Saltcoats. Towards the end of 1893 the property owners assembled at a public meeting and appointed a committee which requested the Lieutenant-Governor in Council to take appropriate action.¹⁴ D. L. Scott, of the law firm of Scott, Hamilton, and Robson in Regina, was employed to check on certain legal technicalities and drafted the notice of intention. The statutory declaration that three copies of the notice had been duly posted in the locality was forwarded to Regina on March 19th, 1894. The Executive Committee advised the Lieutenant-Governor on April 4th that, the requirements of the ordinance having been complied with, the area should be created a village, April 16th fixed for the first election of overseer, and S. G. Fisher appointed returning officer.¹⁵ The Lieutenant-Governor signed the necessary proclamation on April 4th.¹⁶ The event was celebrated as a general holiday not only by the citizens of Saltcoats but also by those of nearby Yorkton, where a holiday was observed so that the latter could take part in the celebration. An excursion train was run from Minnedosa, Manitoba, cricket and lacrosse matches were played, a dramatic performance was given in the evening, and the great day was concluded with a dance.¹⁷ Thus was ushered in the first unit of this new form of local government in the North-West Territories.

In the meantime preliminary steps had been taken in other communities and the following places were proclaimed, in order in which they are listed, before the end of 1894: Grenfell, Gainsboro, Red Deer, Medicine Hat, and Yorkton. In 1896 Maple Creek, Olds, Fleming, and Lacombe were established.

RAPID EXPANSION OF VILLAGE ORGANIZATION, 1898-1905—The rather tentative development of the early period is in sharp contrast to the rapid expansion during the remaining years of the Territorial Government. In the initial stages of this period of more rapid growth the influence of the newly formed Department of Public Works appears to have been significant. During the early part of 1898 Qu'Appelle¹⁸ was established on local initiative at the time of the dissolution of the rural municipality of the same name, and Pincher Creek also was presumably instituted on local initiative. But on October 28th, the Department sent copies of *The Village Ordinance* and of a circular letter to a leading resident of each of a number of small communities, which included Alameda, Battleford, Broadview, Cardston, Duck Lake, Langenburg, Lumsden, Rosthern, Saskatoon, and Wapella. All of these were at that time included in Local Improvement Districts. The letter pointed out that "the local improvement ordinance was framed particularly to meet rural conditions and it was not intended that these districts should include points . . . where the large number of buildings and close settlement bring in questions of public health and safety which do not arise in farming communities."¹⁹ It pointed out that *The Village Ordinance* enabled

¹⁴ S. G. Fisher, Secretary of Committee, to R. B. Gordon, Secretary, Executive Committee, North-West Territories Government, December 16, 1893. "Saltcoats file."

¹⁵ "Saltcoats file."

¹⁶ *North-West Territories Gazette*, April 16, 1894.

¹⁷ *Regina Leader*, September 13, 1894.

¹⁸ The name of the unit was changed to Fort Qu'Appelle by an Order-in-Council dated March 31, 1904. *North-West Territories Gazette*, April 15, 1904.

¹⁹ This circular is to be found in the "Broadview file" and some of the others.

such communities to make improvements, in the matters of public health, protection from fire, etc., which they particularly required. The letter went on to state that the Department intended to post notices of intention to proclaim the area mentioned a village and asked the recipient to make the provisions of the *Ordinance* known to the residents so that they might discuss and deal intelligently with the question. In its annual report for that year²⁰ the Department gave additional reasons for such communities being organized separately from the surrounding rural areas. It mentioned their need for being able to provide water supply and to license hawkers. It pointed out that in Local Improvement Districts a quarter section of land was the basis of taxation and hence the holder of a lot up to 160 acres paid the same as the holder of a much smaller one. Furthermore, it referred to the unfairness of the situation in which the urban population outnumbered the rural and hence could dominate the election of overseer and choice of improvements.

The Department proceeded with the posting of notices in the communities concerned and in a number of cases no obstacles were encountered. Alameda, Broadview, Cardston, Duck Lake, Lumsden, Rosthern, and Wapella were proclaimed on December 29th, 1898 and Battleford on January 6th, 1899.²¹ In other cases, such as Wetaskiwin, Innisfail, High River, Canmore, Fort Saskatchewan, and Okotoks, some of which were almost large enough to be towns, petitions against establishment were sent in. The Department attributed this to the idea being prevalent that it would entail high taxation and extensive municipal machinery.²² But as establishment was still entirely on a voluntary basis, no further action could be taken.

At the 1899 session of the legislature a bill was introduced which provided for the compulsory organization of villages. This brought about a debate which was the most acrimonious in the history of village legislation and which throws considerable light on current ideas regarding the desirability of this form of local government. R. B. Bennett, who had been elected to the Assembly as member for west Calgary in 1898, was the leading opponent. He objected to it in principle in that compulsion involved "a dangerous subversion of the rights of citizenship," and argued that the failure to respect the desire of the majority involved the substitution of autocratic for responsible government. He admitted that "in a new country such as this where among other peculiar circumstances we have a large influx of foreigners unacquainted with our institutions, our laws and even our language . . . a different condition of affairs prevailed from that which obtained in the older towns and communities of the east," but he asserted that the existing ordinance had already taken account of this in putting the initiative in the hands of the Lieutenant-Governor and providing only for a veto by the majority.²³ Another member supported the case against compulsion by alluding to the results of attempted coercion by Charles I and by the Conservative party on the Manitoba school question. Other members reported objections from communities within their constituencies and referred to petitions which had been

²⁰ Department of Public Works, *Annual Report*, 1898, p. 101.

²¹ *North-West Territories Gazette*, February 15, 1899.

²² Department of Public Works, *op. cit.* p. 101.

²³ See reports of debates in the *Regina Standard*, April 27, May 4 and May 18, 1899.

sent in against establishment.²⁴ In the case of St. Albert the petition was stated to have been unanimous.

The Commissioner of Public Works, J. H. Ross, was the chief advocate of the proposal. For the most part he repeated the arguments of the Department of Public Works to which reference has already been made. In reference to the belief of objectors who feared high taxation, he stressed the fact that the question of taxation practically rested with the people themselves. He asserted, though this was denied, that opposition to a similar provision in the Local Improvement Ordinance had all but died away. It was pointed out that the petition from High River had been withdrawn later and that in the case of Fort Saskatchewan the petition had been sent in by non-residents and that the local residents favoured village organization. Dr. Patrick, who had had some experience in the affairs of the village of Yorkton, supported the bill on the grounds that "where considerable numbers were living together they should not be allowed to do as they liked in matters affecting the health and lives of the people and the safety of property and the maintenance of some kind of order . . . the liberty of the individual must to a certain extent be sacrificed to the good of the whole . . . if the people were at liberty to neglect these things then their liberty was not true liberty as he understood it; it was license and it needed the coercion which this bill was intended to supply."²⁵ Eventually the bill containing the compulsory provision became law, and although further complaint against this was voiced in the legislature,²⁶ it remained in effect throughout the remainder of the territorial period.

The compulsory provision enabled the Department of Public Works to proceed with the establishment of villages which had refused to take this step voluntarily.²⁷ Undoubtedly, however, the chief circumstance leading to the growth of village organization was the rapid spread of settlement and the increase in population. Of the nine villages which were established in 1901, eight were the outgrowth of and then formed market centres for thickly settled districts which had had practically no existence two years before.²⁸ The following summary shows the establishment of villages by years, according to the date of the proclamation:²⁹

1894, six; 1895, none; 1896, four; 1897, none; 1898, nine; 1899, twelve; 1900, three; 1901, nine; 1902, four; 1903, twenty-three; 1904, twenty-seven; 1905 (to August 31st), twenty-one.

The growth of population during this period was so great, however, that by August 31st, 1905, twenty of the villages included above had been incorporated as towns.³⁰

RATEPAYERS' MEETINGS—These gatherings were the basic element in the system of village government. The original ordinance of 1893 provided that they might be attended by any person over twenty-one years of age who was assessed

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*, May 18, 1899.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, May 30, 1900 and June 5, 1901.

²⁷ Department of Public Works. *Annual Report*, 1899, p. 63.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 1901, p. 137.

²⁹ Data from *North-West Territories Gazette*.

³⁰ Department of Public Works. *Annual Report*, 1905, p. 109.

for school taxes on land within the village. The inclusiveness of this provision led the *Saskatchewan Herald* to comment that it involved "an extension of the franchise calculated to defeat the object of the ordinance."³¹ In the amendment of 1898 it was restricted to men, unmarried women, and widows, over twenty-one years of age, residing within the village and possessing, holding or occupying land. In 1900, eligibility to attend was again extended and thereafter included any person over the age of twenty-one years whose name appeared on the then last revised assessment list of the village and who had paid all taxes owed by him to the village. In the interpretation of this it was ruled that a person living two miles from the village but paying taxes on a shop in the village had a right to vote,³² but that persons paying a dog tax but not otherwise assessed were not eligible.³³ The original provision regarding the holding of meetings was that only a single one was to be held for the election of an overseer and to consider and pass on activities. As the overseer was to be elected for a term of two years the implication was that such meetings might be held as infrequently as once in two years. However, the overseer was authorized to call meetings for the discussion of business at any time on one week's notice. An amendment in 1896 provided that not more than twelve months were to elapse between business meetings. The calling of business meetings was regularized in 1897 when it was provided that the annual business meeting was to be held before the 1st of April in each year (altered to the 15th of April in 1898). The 1897 amendment also contained provision for special business meetings which the overseer was required to call on the request of any five voters or which he might call on his own initiative.

Only a few village activities were provided for in 1893. The ratepayers' meeting was authorized to fix the tax rate and decide about improvements to be made, whether or not animals were to be permitted to run at large, and the securing of appliances and water supply for fire protection purposes. But from then until the end of the territorial period there was a steady enlargement in powers. Villages were authorized to decide at ratepayers' meetings to tax dogs and license hawkers, secure refuse and recreation grounds and cemeteries, encourage tree planting, and make regulations to promote cleanliness in the village and to prevent disease. Generally speaking the villages seemed anxious to expand their activities, particularly of a regulatory nature. On occasions they enquired of the Department of Public Works as to their authority in matters not specifically mentioned in the ordinance and even took action which had to be rescinded when it was discovered to be beyond their powers.

An examination of the material available relating to individual villages indicates that there was great variation in the interest in the ratepayers' meeting from place to place and in a given community from time to time. On occasions the overseer would have to report that no one had turned up at a duly announced meeting.³⁴ In contrast, the interest in Grenfell was great enough in 1901 to lead

³¹ *Saskatchewan Herald*, September 8, 1893.

³² Deputy Commissioner of Public Works, to H. C. Adams, Battleford, June 22, 1900. "Battleford file."

³³ Deputy Commissioner of Public Works to R. Gwynne, overseer of Grenfell, November 21, 1901. "Grenfell file."

³⁴ e.g., G. J. Jupp, overseer of Village of Fleming to "The Executive Committee," Regina, October 20, 1897. "Fleming file."

the Royal Templars of Temperance, a flourishing organization at that time, to postpone their regular meeting because it conflicted with a ratepayers' meeting.³⁵ In a fairly large sample of meetings in various villages the attendance mostly ranged between six and twenty persons. Frequently business meetings were adjourned for further consideration of a topic or to await the report of a committee. Special meetings were frequently called. One of the most frequent reasons for this was to fix the date at which regulations dealing with animals running at large were to be in effect. Emergency problems connected with public improvements and fire protection necessitated many special meetings and other subjects included investigating the overseer's affairs and considering the formation of a Board of Health. In some cases meetings were conducted with a great deal of formality. Yorkton in 1896 adopted a very detailed order of business.³⁶ Rosthern in 1899 and 1900 appears to have followed quite closely the order prescribed by ordinance.³⁷ In many other cases, however, the evidence available suggests that the meetings were rather informal and concerned chiefly with the improvements to be made. In descriptions of meetings one finds references to such discussions in such terms as "brief," "considerable," "a good deal," and "discussed at length." While most records give only the decisions reached, there are some which indicate that there were considerable differences of opinion, as evidenced by the number of proposals and counter-proposals that were voted on.³⁸

OVERSEERS AND OTHER OFFICIALS—The overseer was by far the most important and in some cases the only executive officer in the village organization. He was authorized and directed by ordinance to attend to the carrying out of the instructions of the ratepayers' meeting and had a general responsibility for the enforcement of the provisions of the ordinance. Only male ratepayers were eligible for election. Once when the subject of the exclusion of women was raised in the legislative assembly it was stated that "there was no object except that there were certain duties which we could hardly expect members of the opposite sex to perform."³⁹ The member went on to say that he didn't think there was "much danger" of a lady being elected overseer and the matter was then dropped. From 1893 to 1897 the overseer's term was two years but thereafter he had to be elected annually. He was required to provide bonds for the due performance of his duty and the correct accounting for all moneys received. The need for this was demonstrated on several occasions. For example, the Grenfell village auditor for the year 1900 reported that the books showed that \$316.38 should be on hand but that "on questioning the overseer I learn that there is no cash whatever."⁴⁰ The bondsmen were rather reluctant to reimburse the village but eventually did so in large part. On another occasion the overseer of Gainsboro asserted that \$600 appeared to be unaccounted for by his predecessor.⁴¹

Competition for the office of overseer was not at all keen. He was elected

³⁵ *Grenfell Sun*, May 23, 1901.

³⁶ Unincorporated Town and Village of Yorkton "Minutes of Ratepayers' Meetings, 1894-1905" (hereafter referred to as "Yorkton Minutes"), Minutes of July 27, 1896.

³⁷ Copies of minutes of ratepayers' meetings of April 5, 1899 and March 28, 1900. "Rosthern file."

³⁸ "Yorkton Minutes," Minutes of March 30, 1899.

³⁹ *Regina Standard*, May 30, 1900.

⁴⁰ "Grenfell file."

⁴¹ W. D. Keenan, overseer of Gainsboro, to Commissioner of Public Works, June 25, 1904. "Gainsboro file."

at the ratepayers' meeting by those entitled to attend and, as has been noted, attendance thereat was often small. Furthermore, the overseer was frequently elected by acclamation and in some cases for a number of years in succession. For example, J. J. English was overseer of Maple Creek from its establishment in 1896 to 1899.⁴² W. B. Southett was overseer of Saltcoats continuously from 1896 to 1903.⁴³ W. M. Thomson, who had earlier taken a prominent part in the rural Municipality of Qu'Appelle, was overseer of the village from 1901 to 1905.⁴⁴ The difficulty of securing competent overseers is illustrated by the comment of a returning officer, in reporting the re-election of an overseer by acclamation in spite of the fact that "there has been a good deal of trouble with . . . [him] during the last year, in not finishing the work when he should."⁴⁵

The evidence available indicates that there were wide differences in the abilities of overseers. The ordinance attempted to ensure efficiency in their performance of duties by providing penalties which ranged between \$10 and \$100. In spite of this some of them did not even keep books.⁴⁶ An examination of some they did keep shows that, in addition to handwriting being sometimes scarcely legible, the recording was often incomplete and inaccurate. It was a frequent practice to have returns required by the Territorial Government made up by someone else. However, many of them were apparently conscientious. The auditor of Grenfell for its first year said "the overseer . . . is quite new to the work, and will no doubt be able another year, to submit them to the auditor more explicitly."⁴⁷ The overseer of Rosthern wrote to the Department of Public Works on one occasion that "it may be altogether unbecoming to ask these questions but I should do [sic] what is right and not go beyond my authority,"⁴⁸ and shortly afterwards in sending in a copy of the minutes of the annual meeting he said "you will greatly oblige by examining said minutes and drop me a line or two stating whether they are acceptable." Another overseer reported that ". . . insofar as lay in my power I have endeavoured to carry out the provisions of the ordinance re the government of the village and in doing so have been upheld by the ratepayers."⁴⁹ The outstanding village overseer of the territorial period appears to have been Reginald Gwynne, a Deputy Sherriff, who took over as overseer of Grenfell when affairs were in a bad state. His energy is indicated by the large number of occasions and subjects on which he corresponded with the Department of Public Works, by his collection regularly of almost 100% of taxes by the end of year, by his strict enforcement of regulations, and by his efficient carrying out of improvements in the village. His records are not preserved but, by his own statement, the accounts for the first year took up eleven or

⁴² "Maple Creek file."

⁴³ "Saltcoats file."

⁴⁴ "Fort Qu'Appelle file."

⁴⁵ Returning officer of Maple Creek to Deputy Commissioner of Public Works, December 12, 1900. "Maple Creek file."

⁴⁶ For an instance see W. D. Keenan, overseer of Gainsboro, to Public Works Department, January 21, 1904. "Gainsboro file."

⁴⁷ Samuel Taylor, auditor, to Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Territories, October 26, 1894. "Grenfell file."

⁴⁸ Wm. Rempel, overseer of Rosthern to Deputy Commissioner of Public Works, February 16, 1900. "Rosthern file."

⁴⁹ A. McLeod, overseer of Broadview, to Commissioner of Public Works, November 27, 1901. "Broadview file."

twelve pages of foolscap, thirty-five lines to the inch.⁵⁰ Testimony to his efficiency is to be found in the reports of the village auditor and newspaper editorials.⁵¹ Recognition of his efforts by the villages generally and their approval thereof is suggested by the passing at a ratepayers' meeting of a hearty vote of thanks "unanimously with cheering."⁵²

It must be agreed that the financial inducement to become an overseer was small indeed. His salary was fixed by the ordinance of 1893 at \$50 per annum. From 1897 on it was to be fixed by the ratepayers' meeting, within a range of \$15 to \$50. In the following year the maximum was raised to \$100. Village records available show actual salaries to have been as low as \$25 and frequently to have been \$50, \$60, \$75, and \$85. Towards the end of the period there was a tendency to pay the maximum of \$100. In addition, he was entitled to a commission of 2½%, from 1893 to 1897, on all moneys passing through his hands, and from 1898 onwards to all taxes collected. This monetary return, small in relation to the activity involved in a proper performance of the job, would in itself have constituted little inducement to persons of the necessary capacity.

One change in the system was proposed in 1897. Dr. Patrick of Yorkton introduced a bill to replace the overseer by a board of three trustees, on the model of the school district organization, but with expenditures and regulations to be decided on as before by ratepayers' meetings.⁵³ He stated that one village had specifically asked for it as a result of their experience. Opinion in regard to the proposal differed. Haultain contended that while a single official might be good in large cities, the representative system was good in small communities because of the good training it afforded for public service. Another speaker thought the existing simple system was working well and opposed the change on the ground that it would scatter the work and divide the responsibility. He thought that experience in municipalities showed that this would result in work being neglected. The bill was withdrawn later in the session and the matter appears to have been dropped for the remainder of the territorial period.

The only other official regularly appointed was the auditor. This was required by ordinance. At first he was elected by the ratepayers' meeting but from 1901 on he was appointed by the Territorial Government. If regulations were made restricting animals running at large the overseer might act as poundkeeper or appoint another person to that position. *The Village Ordinance* provided for the appointment of a scavenger from 1897 on and of a watermaster after 1903.

RATEPAYERS' COMMITTEES—The ratepayers' meeting and the aforementioned officials constituted the whole of the local government machinery provided for by ordinance. In actual practice, however, an important part was played by committees appointed by ratepayers' meetings. Accounts of such meetings frequently contain references to reports being made, without mention of the nature of the committee, and in some cases there is information available which gives an idea of the purpose of such bodies. Many of them were apparently the

⁵⁰ R. Gwynne, overseer of Grenfell, to Deputy Commissioner of Public Works, November 28, 1901. "Grenfell file."

⁵¹ e.g., *Grenfell Sun*, August 31, 1905.

⁵² "Grenfell file."

⁵³ *Regina Leader*, December 16, 1897.

outgrowth of discussions at a regular meeting and were appointed to assemble information to facilitate the making of decisions on policy at a later meeting. Examples are the appointment of committees to consider means of fire protection (Yorkton and Grenfell) and committees to investigate the overseer's activities (Yorkton and Gainsboro). At Yorkton, where the committee system was used extensively, committees were appointed at various times to submit the annual estimates for public improvements.⁵⁴ At Rosthern in 1899 a committee of five, including the overseer, was appointed to look after the construction of sidewalks.⁵⁵ These additions to the formal machinery undoubtedly facilitated the government of the village by providing some of the advantages associated with representative government.

An interesting, though unique, development was an "advisory board" which functioned in Grenfell from 1901 onward. This board, composed of local residents, was selected by the overseer and endorsed by the ratepayers' meeting.⁵⁶ Apparently the overseer consulted with this board in preparing estimates and in regard to the carrying out of his duties but what its actual influence was is a matter of speculation.

VILLAGE ACTIVITIES—These fall almost entirely into three categories: those that were entirely regulatory, those involving public services provided out of the general revenues of the village, and those which were a combination of the two preceding. The restricting of animals running at large was the most important of the purely regulatory activities. Public services were largely of the "local improvement" type, such as the provision of sidewalks and drains and the surfacing of streets, but some villages undertook also to provide cemeteries and recreation grounds. The measures for the prevention of fire and disease are the chief examples of activities which involved a combination of regulation and local government service.

Provision for the ratepayers' meeting passing regulations regarding animals running at large was included in *The Village Ordinance* from 1893 on and at least three of the early villages, Maple Creek, Saltcoats, and Yorkton, took advantage of it. The animals which might be restricted were, according to the 1894 amendment, horses, cattle, sheep, or pigs and in 1896 mules, jacks, goats, and geese were added. A pound was to be provided by the overseer or by someone appointed by him. As the cost of the poundkeeper's services were covered by the fees payable by the owners of impounded animals no expense to the village was involved. After 1898 villages might apply to come under *The Pound District Ordinance*⁵⁷ and various ones were constituted pound districts thereunder.⁵⁸ Various degrees of restriction were introduced. Yorkton prohibited running at large at any time.⁵⁹ More frequently the restriction applied only to the summer season (e.g., May 1st to October 1st) but Saltcoats in 1897 amended its "bye-law" to permit cattle and horses but not sheep, pigs and poultry, to run between

⁵⁴ "Yorkton Minutes," August 10, 1897 and March 29, 1898.

⁵⁵ "Rosthern file."

⁵⁶ *Grenfell Sun*, June 3, 1901.

⁵⁷ Ordinance No. 21 of 1897.

⁵⁸ e.g., Order-in-Council dated May 27, 1898. *North-West Territories Gazette*. May 31, 1898.

⁵⁹ "Yorkton Minutes," July 27, 1896.

8 A.M. and 8 P.M.⁶⁰ Various overseers attempted at times to secure compliance with the regulations by writing a warning letter⁶¹ and by inserting warning notices in a local paper.⁶² If this failed he might exercise his authority under the ordinance to enforce the regulation.

A variety of other regulations were passed from time to time: e.g., prohibition at Saltcoats of ball playing on thoroughfares and the use of foul and blasphemous language in public,⁶³ and requiring the removal of street obstructions.⁶⁴ Some of this regulation was beyond the powers of the village and they were so informed, as when Rosthern attempted to restrict riding of bicycles on sidewalks⁶⁵ and when Grenfell attempted to require owners of property to keep sidewalks opposite them clean of snow.⁶⁶ The mere fact that such regulations had been passed may have had some effect. In any case the chief deterrent to the breaking of regulations must have been moral suasion, as the records show that convictions and fines were very infrequent.

Public works of the local improvement type were normally the largest single item of village expenditure and in many years involved the bulk of the outlay. Even small concentrations of population involved an urgent need for at least a minimum level of such provision. The chief items were street surfacing, sidewalks, drains and street crossings, but on occasions such amenities were provided as trees for shade and beautification. Occasional expenditures are mentioned on wells and in 1903 provision was made for the securing of a water supply on a more extensive scale. Public improvements were constructed either by contract or day labour. In the latter case the overseer would supervise the work and frequently engage in it directly.

As has been mentioned, the territorial system of regulation to prevent fire and disease was incorporated in the legislation providing for village government. This continued to the end of the period and in later years the regulations specified by ordinance became more detailed. In addition, the ratepayers' meeting was authorized to make additional regulations of its own. The great advantage of the local government approach, however, was that it made possible positive action. Drains were frequently constructed to improve the health of the community. Nuisance grounds could be provided. Similarly in the case of fire. It was no longer necessary to rely on equipment supplied to volunteer organizations by private donation. It was probably with some pride that a Yorkton ratepayers' meeting instructed that the village ladders and pails should be initialed "Y.F.B." in black on a red background.⁶⁷ Judging by contemporary accounts it was probably necessary also to ensure that they were not dispersed by villagers using them for other than fire purposes. As time passed this simple equipment tended

⁶⁰ Unincorporated Town and Village of Saltcoats "Minutes of Ratepayers' Meetings," 1894-1909. Minutes, April 19, 1897.

⁶¹ S. C. Elkington, overseer of village of Qu'Appelle, to R. Shore, August 31, 1898. Village of Qu'Appelle, "Letter Book."

⁶² e.g., *Grenfell Sun*, May 4, 1905.

⁶³ "Saltcoats Minutes," April 19, 1897.

⁶⁴ "Yorkton Minutes," July 27, 1895.

⁶⁵ Deputy Commissioner of Public Works to Wm. Rempel, overseer of Rosthern, April 11, 1900. "Rosthern file."

⁶⁶ Deputy Commissioner of Public Works to R. Gwynne, overseer of Grenfell, December 24, 1901. "Grenfell file."

⁶⁷ "Yorkton Minutes," July 27, 1896.

to be replaced by such relatively expensive items as "Little Victor" fire extinguishers, and, towards the end of this period, chemical engines⁶⁸ and manual engines.⁶⁹

FINANCE—From the general tenor of discussions of financial policy in contemporary territorial newspapers one gets the impression that every effort was made to keep down local expenditures. Taxes of any kind were unpopular. Residents of every locality, urban as well as rural, showed a decided tendency to rely financially upon the Territorial Government as much as possible. The local financing of activities was accepted grudgingly and usually only in connection with urgent needs for which the Territorial Government, itself largely dependent upon the federal subsidy, could not provide the funds.

The financial requirements of individual villages varied in accordance with the nature and extent of their activities and total expenditures show great variation. As would be expected the latter tended to increase as population grew and as the residents became convinced that their needs could be met adequately only with the more expensive types of services, e.g., in regard to fire protection. Saltcoats spent only \$34.25 in the year in which it was established.⁷⁰ There were few cases, however, in which less than \$100 was spent but amounts between that and \$300 were quite common. By 1905 expenditures (for the full year) had risen in Saltcoats to \$1,260.45,⁷¹ in Broadview to \$2,864.27,⁷² and in Grenfell to \$2,864.27.⁷³

Villages were given the right to tap a wider variety of revenue sources than their rural equivalent, the Local Improvement District. Their chief reliance, however, was on the levying of a rate on real and personal property. Minor sources of current revenue were the poll tax (from 1893 to 1899), license fees of small amounts levied on travelling entertainments, billiard and pool tables, and hawkers, the dog tax, and fines for infractions of regulations. Current revenue could be supplemented with a limited amount of borrowing.

Little information is available about the assessment on which the rate was levied because the villages were permitted to make use of the school assessment roll. The information available suggests that real property constituted a larger total than personal property. For example, the assessment of real property in Maple Creek in 1899 was \$52,335.00 out of a total of \$84,945.00.⁷⁴ The only specific statement discovered regarding the basis of valuation for assessment purposes is to the effect that Grenfell property was assessed at 75% of its value.⁷⁵ Though a fairly active real estate market was a general characteristic of the period, increasingly so in the later years, there may well have been many times and places where assessment values were purely nominal as in a case of 1898. In that year a taxpayer residing in England was advised, "the land in question is

⁶⁸ *Grenfell Sun*, April 20, 1905.

⁶⁹ W. C. Thorburn, overseer of Broadview, to Commissioner of Public Works, April 22, 1905. "Broadview file."

⁷⁰ "Return of the Unincorporated Village of Saltcoats, 1894." "Saltcoats file."

⁷¹ Annual Return for 1905, "Financial Statement." "Saltcoats file."

⁷² *Ibid.*, "Broadview file."

⁷³ *Ibid.*, "Grenfell file."

⁷⁴ Special statement by overseer of Maple Creek to the Department of Public Works. "Maple Creek file."

⁷⁵ *Grenfell Sun*, April 20, 1905.

a building lot in the village and would probably sell for the amount of assessment, £20, if wanted, but the sale of town lots is very limited owing to the want of railway facilities.”⁷⁶ Because of the large amount of land within village limits being held purely for speculative purposes it is not surprising that lots were sometimes valued as low as \$5.00 each⁷⁷ but assessments of \$20 to \$75 were common. In regard to buildings there are records of elevators having been assessed at \$1,000, \$2,000, \$3,000, and \$3,500. Many types of personal property were exempted by ordinance, e.g., household effects, books, wearing apparel, hay and grain. Some idea of the variety of personal property assessed is given by the following examples from Saskatoon in 1901: lumber, store merchandise, tools of a blacksmith, cows, horses, and implements.⁷⁸ A court case in Battleford involving the Hudson’s Bay Company established the fact that book debts were taxable in the district in which they were owing.⁷⁹

The “single-tax” movement which had considerable popularity in Western Canada in the eighteen-nineties was reflected in the insertion in the ordinance in 1899 of a provision which permitted a village, on the petition of at least three-quarters (altered to two-thirds in 1900) of the voters, to levy its rate entirely on the unimproved value of land. Wetaskiwin adopted the single-tax system in 1899⁸⁰ and several others later.⁸¹ The effect of this in Broadview was to reduce the total assessment from \$69,180 to \$16,435.⁸² The Department of Public Works believed in 1900 that the system was working well and advocated it generally as a means of eliminating the guess work in assessing.⁸³

The maximum tax rate which might be levied was fixed by ordinance at five mills on the dollar in 1893 and at ten mills from 1894 onward, except that where the single tax was in effect (after 1899) the maximum might be twenty mills. In view of the conservative financial policy generally followed the legislative restriction seems hardly to have been necessary. Except where the single tax was in effect only a few cases have been noted, e.g., Cardston in 1899, Rosthern in 1900, and Riversdale in 1905, in which the rate was as high as ten mills. Broadview, under the single tax system, levied rates of ten mills in 1902, fifteen mills in 1904, and twenty mills in 1905. But most levies were much lower. The village of Qu’Appelle, having a surplus of \$130.00 on hand, did not make any levy in 1899.⁸⁴ Saltcoats never levied a rate higher than two mills. The average rate of assessment for all villages was three and four-fifths mills in 1899⁸⁵ and about five and one-half mills in 1900.⁸⁶

Borrowing was resorted to as a supplement to current revenue to meet both current and capital outlays. Opinion⁸⁷ was decidedly against local government

⁷⁶ S. C. Elkington, overseer of the Village of Qu’Appelle, to ?, Hampstead, September 21, 1898. Village of Qu’Appelle, “Letter Book.”

⁷⁷ e.g., in Saskatoon in 1902. “Saskatoon file.”

⁷⁸ “Return of Taxes Due.” “Saskatoon file.”

⁷⁹ “Battleford file.”

⁸⁰ Department of Public Works, *Annual Report*, 1899, p. 63.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 1900, p. 90.

⁸² A. McLeod, overseer of Broadview, to Deputy Commissioner of Public Works, April 30, 1902. “Broadview file.”

⁸³ Department of Public Works, *Annual Report*, 1900, p. 90.

⁸⁴ *The Vidette*, May 10, 1899.

⁸⁵ Department of Public Works, *Annual Report*, 1899, p. 63.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 1900, p. 89.

⁸⁷ e.g., Debate in legislative assembly on December 9, 1897, *Regina Leader*, December 16, 1897.

units being able to contract debt which might result in financial difficulties and the right to borrow was conceded by the legislature grudgingly and within strict limits. At first the debt was restricted to \$100.00, incurred pending the collection of taxes, and was to be repaid by December 25th. The limit was raised by stages and from 1900 onwards a village might borrow up to \$1,000, providing this was not more than 10% of the assessed property, to be expended on permanent improvements and repayable within ten years. In many villages delay in the collection of taxes resulted in the need for credit to finance current expenditures. This came from a variety of sources: debts to merchants and even to those who had been engaged on public works remained unpaid, sometimes over the end of the year; the overseer frequently was not paid and in some cases advanced funds to the village; and loans were secured from private individuals and from bankers, both commercial and private. Especially in the later years the cost of such capital items as fire fighting equipment, sidewalks, water supply, and street improvements led numerous villages to take advantage of the provisions of the ordinance and finance these items by the issue of debentures. But the combination of legislative restriction and conservative local financial policy was sufficiently effective that no evidence of default on village debt has been discovered.

RELATION OF VILLAGES TO THE TERRITORIAL GOVERNMENT—The village unit was an example of "delegated government." Constitutional provision for it and for analagous units shows no influence of the "home-rule" development in the United States which involved the concession of a certain amount of independence from state legislatures. The village in the North-West Territories operated only within the sphere assigned to it by statute, principally *The Village Ordinance*. The general nature of this legislative control, in such fields as activities and revenue sources permitted, borrowing powers, and conduct of elections and meetings, has already been outlined. Other important aspects of the relationship were the *administrative* controls exercised by the Territorial Government and the rendering by the latter of various forms of assistance to the village organization.

From the beginning in 1893 the Territorial Government was authorized and required by ordinance to exercise varying degrees and forms of administrative control over the affairs of the village. It had to take certain steps in connection with the establishment of the village and the latter was required each year to furnish returns regarding such matters as the collection and expenditure of funds, fines imposed, and debts outstanding. For some years supervision was rather loose. The executive committee, through its clerk, or individual members of that committee dealt with particular problems coming up. But no thorough-going attempt appears to have been made to ensure that the requirements of *The Ordinance* were carried out in regard to such things as the filing of returns and sending in of overseers' bonds. For a short time in 1897-1898 the Territorial Secretary was responsible for administrative control. In 1898 supervision of villages was entrusted to the newly formed Department of Public Works and the scope of such supervision was enlarged during the following years. Certain types of borrowing had to be approved by the Commissioner of Public Works. The latter was given authority to remove and replace overseers and to appoint them if they were not elected in the normal fashion. He appointed the auditor

from 1901 on. Commissioners of Public Works appear to have taken this responsibility seriously. For example, special forms were provided for the annual returns required and vigorous attempts made to see that these were properly filled out and filed promptly. Any delay or lack of formality in the election of overseer or in connection with his bonds was followed up. On various occasions complaints regarding faults of commission or omission of the overseer were investigated and in a number of cases the latter was informed as to his duty in no uncertain terms.

The Department of Public Works provided various forms of assistance to the local administration. *The Ordinance* after 1901 provided for the system of dealing with overdue taxes which was already in use in Local Improvement Districts. Unpaid taxes were to be "confirmed" by the court and after two years the property involved could be vested in the Crown and thereafter the Public Works Department was to be responsible for the payment of taxes. Some use, but not a great deal, appears to have been made of this provision. The Department also made available to the village the use of some of its road equipment, in which case the village had to pay the wages of the operator. Finally, the Department acted in a general advisory capacity. Much help was given in interpreting the ordinance and in educating the local officials as to methods of procedure. And frequently the Department would give salutary advice in regard to various activities which the villages were contemplating.

The exercise of so much influence, especially through formal administrative control, aroused opposition and the discussions about this throw light on views currently held as to the proper function of the village as a unit of government. One example was the legislative debate over the granting of power to the Commissioner of Public Works to remove and appoint overseers.⁸⁸ The defence of the proposal on the grounds of simplicity led R. B. Bennett to say "it seems to me that the essence of this ideal simplicity means in reality an absolute bureaucracy. All power is given to the man [i.e., the Commissioner] and the rights of the people are relegated to oblivion." In spite of this opposition the provision was enacted, in conformity with the point of view that, in the words of Dr. Patrick, "they had adopted the principle not to bestow on these small villages all the powers of the municipality. They are youthful municipalities which have not attained their majority, and were subject to the guardianship of their father who was the Commissioner of Works." This relation, however, was not considered to involve any mean status for the village or to imply that the local residents were incapable of greater civic responsibility. In one of its reports, referring to villages having "outgrown the village stage" and having taken steps "to advance to town dignity," the Department of Public Works lauded *The Village Ordinance* for having "provided the groundwork of municipal self-government," and indicated to the residents the advantages of organization and municipal improvements.⁸⁹ A survey of the development of local government in the North-West Territories seems to support this contention and to establish the fact the village unit was a most useful part of the system, both as a means of meeting the needs of the moment and as a basis for further advance.

A. N. REID

⁸⁸ *Regina Standard*, May 29, 1901.

⁸⁹ Department of Public Works, *Annual Report*, 1901, p. 137.

The First Child Welfare Conferences in Saskatchewan

SASKATCHEWAN has the reputation of being "health-minded." This reputation was not achieved in a day, but is the result of a series of ventures in health services, of which one of the most significant was the pre-school clinic, or, as it was variously called—the baby show, Babies' Welfare Contest or Conference, and finally the Child Welfare Conference. In 1916 the first two of these "Babies' Welfare Contests" or Conferences were held in Regina and in Weyburn. The following year, 1917, a conference was held at Midale, and in 1918 conferences were conducted by members of the staff of the Bureau of Public Health at North Battleford, Creelman and Midale; at other points exhibits were lent and instructions and assistance given to local societies organizing the work.

That there was a need for such conferences is indicated by the following comments in the Bureau of Public Health Annual Report for 1915-1916:

"During the year 1916, 2,283 children under five years of age died; of these, 1,756 died under one year of age.

There is no doubt that a very large number of these deaths could have been prevented had it been possible to secure proper care for the baby and also for the mother before and at the baby's birth.

The cause of the greatest number of deaths was *Congenital Debility*, which accounted for 511; this again points to the probability that mothers are not in good physical condition during pregnancy; an overworked, ill-nourished mother cannot possibly give birth to a strong child with the power to resist the dangers of early life.

One hundred and eighty-three (183) deaths under one year were due to Bronchitis and Pneumonia, a great deal of which was probably due to poor ventilation and unhealthy surroundings . . .

One hundred and sixty-five (165) were due to diseases of the digestive system . . . These diseases are due in a great measure to improper and irregular feeding . . . The artificially fed children are more prone to these diseases, pointing to impure milk carelessly handled, presence of flies, and poor conditions generally."¹

Elsewhere in the same report it was stated that total infant mortality for 1915 was 1,821, an increase of 183 over the previous year, the rate being 89.5 per 1,000 live births. In 1916, the number of deaths increased to 2,283, or a rate of 103.3 per 1,000 live births.² This may be compared to the 1950 rate of 31.8 per 1,000 live births. The report paints a tragic picture of children dying from diarrhoea, scarlet fever, whooping cough, measles and diphtheria.

People became alarmed at prevailing conditions, and many public-spirited citizens realized that a campaign in the field of education for the care of infants and young children was necessary. In this campaign excellent leadership was found in the Bureau of Public Health under Commissioner Dr. M. M. Seymour

¹ Saskatchewan, Bureau of Public Health, *Annual Report, 1915-1916*, p. 34.

² *Ibid.*, p. 97. The report also indicated that since 1899 the highest number of deaths under five years of age per 1,000 deaths occurred in 1916.

and Public Health Supervisor Dr. F. C. Middleton. The campaign was aimed not only at the instruction of mothers in the care and feeding of children but was aimed also at reducing the threats inherent in bad sanitation. Campaigns were inaugurated for safe water supply, sanitary sewage disposal, pure milk—this latter campaign branching out into a campaign for tuberculin testing of cattle and into pasteurization of milk. A very great deal of attention was given to flies as a disease-bearing pest.

The organizers of the first conference used the Regina Exhibition of 1916 as the occasion for securing widespread interest and participation in their program. In *The Morning Leader* of July 22, 1916, we find this paragraph under the big black type announcing horse racing and a dog show:

"A baby show and babies' welfare conference will be held during the Exhibition under the direction of Dr. M. M. Seymour, Commissioner of Public Health for the Province of Saskatchewan . . . Parents from all over the province are invited to bring their children to this conference and enter them in the various competitions. Dr. Seymour has arranged for ten classes in which a total of \$220.00 is offered in prize money. There will be prizes in each class of firsts, \$10.00; second, \$7.00; third \$5.00."

It was announced that on Friday morning there would be a distribution of prizes and a grand parade of the thirty prize babies. One searches in vain for the names of the prize-winning babies: they do not appear to have taken part in the great parade of cattle, sheep and hogs on Friday morning. But this tid-bit is offered from *The Evening Province*, under the headline "Fathers Becoming Very Interested:"

"It is interesting to note the number of men who are asking for the literature supplied. It is safe guessing that if the fathers really become interested in this movement it will make quite a difference, since to judge from the exhibits of live stock, many of them have considerable knowledge and experience in the matter of rearing young animals, and babies, for all their wiles and charms, are, in the last analysis, little animals . . ."³

The conference began with the examination of the babies, Doctors Middleton, Clendinnin and Leggett being the examining physicians. The standard score card approved by the American Medical Association was used, and the tests were, as reported in *The Leader*: (a) Mental development; (b) Measurements; (c) Physical examination; (d) Oral and dental examination; (e) Eye, ear, nose and throat examination.

Two hundred and four children up to three years were examined: normal, fifty-seven, or twenty-eight per cent. A total of 327 abnormal conditions were found, some light, some more serious.⁴ Next in importance were the lectures given by eminent doctors from many parts of the province—here are a few topics selected from the list: Prenatal Care, Dr. S. C. Corbett, Regina; Infant Feeding, Dr. McKay, Saskatoon; Weaning and Teething, Dr. F. C. Middleton, Regina; Ophthalmic Nonatorem, Dr. A. S. Gorrell, Regina; Diseases of Infancy, Dr. Robertson Moose Jaw; The Development of the Normal Child, Dr. Hugh McLean,

³ *The Evening Province*, July 27, 1916, p. 3.

⁴ Saskatchewan, Bureau of Public Health, *Annual Report, 1917-1918*, p. 27.

Regina; Care of Children's Teeth, Dr. H. Cochrane, Qu'Appelle. These lectures were later printed in full in *The Evening Province*. Besides the lectures given by the doctors, lectures and demonstrations were given each morning by Miss Pithie, public health nurse. Miss Rose McElhone, in charge of the city of Regina milk station, gave instruction and demonstrations on the care and feeding of infants and children each afternoon. Valuable literature dealing with all sorts of topics relating to the health and care of children was distributed free of charge.

The conference made a strong impression on public opinion. It was announced in all the churches of Regina and Moose Jaw on the Sunday before Exhibition. Over two hundred children under three years of age were examined, and the lectures were well attended. Dr. Seymour is quoted in headline type on July 26th—"Finest Baby Show ever held in Canada."⁵ The press of the day gives further evidence of the interest aroused, for there began to appear numerous articles dealing with the city milk station, the Welfare Bureau, reports of health conditions in other provinces and in other countries. One reads too, of the maternity grant of twenty-five dollars made by the provincial government "in cases where the information has shown that the expectant mother was not in a position to bear the expenses of medical attention."⁶

The second conference was held in Weyburn also at the time of the Exhibition, August 7th to 9th. This conference was, of course, local in character, and a mere eighty-eight babies were examined in comparison with Regina's two hundred and four. Posters were displayed at the Exhibition Grounds, and lectures were given by Dr. Seymour, Dr. Bigham and Dr. Macdonald.⁷ In Weyburn, the widening sphere of interest is shown by the fact that Rev. Hugh Dobson, Social Service Secretary of the Methodist Church, delivered two addresses prior to the Conference, the first on Saturday night in the city's one theatre, the second on Sunday afternoon when he addressed a mass meeting, speaking on the work and aims of social service. The examination of children was conducted in Assiniboia School. Dr. Middleton, from the Bureau of Public Health, then very young, and very shy, worked heroically. It was he who examined nearly all of the eighty-eight babies.

But my memories of the Weyburn Baby Conference are not of lectures and statistics, but of behind-the-scenes anxiety, frustration, and final organization. This conference was held under the auspices of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. The president, Mrs. W. P. Reekie, and the secretary, Mrs. H. O. Powell, were unable to act due to absence and accident and the organizing devolved upon the unwilling shoulders of the writer. But the women of Weyburn rallied. They set up committees—"Place and Equipment" (if I remember rightly, it took some doing to persuade the School Board to let us use the school); "Helpers" (what a lot of work there was for them,—directing the mothers, assisting with the children, looking after a hundred and one details, distributing literature). The nurses in the city were wonderful, both those in the hospital and those in private duty. The local doctors co-operated. *The Weyburn Review* gave us free publicity. But I'll never forget the struggle for equipment—sheets for the examining

⁵ *The Morning Leader*, July 26, 1916.

⁶ Letter to the editor from the Hon. George Langley, *The Morning Leader*, August 3, 1916.

⁷ *The Morning Leader*, August 11, 1916.

tables; two clean towels for each baby, one for the table, one for a wrap-around—there were no paper towels in those days. I remember the wash basins, the soap, the slop pails. I remember the silver spoons for the babies' mouths (it turned out they weren't needed, the Bureau supplied spatulas). I remember the struggle to get some of the mothers to bring their children for examination. For in Weyburn as elsewhere, it was too often the children who most needed attention who were never brought to the clinics, free though they were. But the Weyburn Conference was a great success, and there were no prizes given.

By 1919 interest throughout the province was growing rapidly. According to the Bureau's *Annual Report* clinics (as they were now called) were held during that year at Langham, Radisson, Riceton, Estevan, Limerick, Midale, Yorkton, Lancer and Maidstone. At the same time two public health nurses were giving lectures and demonstrations on home nursing at thirty-nine places, with an average attendance of sixty women. Such local organizations as the Red Cross Society, the Women's Grain Growers Association and Homemakers' Clubs gave assistance in organization and arrangements.⁸

The Yorkton clinic was a part of a four-day Child Welfare Conference held in the City Hall under the auspices of the Yorkton Social Service Council. Lectures for school children, collegiate students and mothers were given by the Rev. Hugh Dobson, Nurse Pithie and District School Nurse Russel. In an address to men, Dr. Seymour pointed out the seriousness and far-reaching effect of venereal disease, and the V.D. film "Fit to Fight" was shown, which was a notable venture in view of the prevailing tendency to shun discussion of this subject. The clinical work was conducted by Dr. Middleton, assisted by all the local doctors and nurses. One hundred and sixty children were examined, fifty-seven of whom were reported as without defect. The score cards of the children examined were sent to Regina for tabulation and were then returned to the committee for distribution to the mothers.

The reception which this conference received from the public is indicated in the following report in *The Yorkton Press*:

"The visitors had nothing but praise for the way in which all the arrangements had been made. Everything passed off without a hitch. As president of the Social Service Council, J. M. Telford was indefatigable, being greatly assisted by the Conference officers—chairman, Mrs. J. M. Telford; secretary, Mrs. Stewart; committee, Mrs. Homer Tedford, Miss Walker (matron of Queen Victoria Hospital), Mrs. A. J. Logan, Mrs. J. A. M. Patrick, Mrs. Dave Larmour, Mrs. Knox, Mrs. Denovan, Mrs. Lanceley, Mrs. Crawford."⁹

By 1923 the work in connection with child health and welfare had grown enormously. The *Annual Report* of the Department of Public Health (no longer a mere bureau) records sixty-seven clinics with 3,218 children examined; also sixty-four home nursing classes, with a total attendance of 3,848. The largest of the clinics was held at Melville, on September 11th and 12th, with two hundred and sixty-three children under six years of age examined. It is interesting to note

⁸ Saskatchewan, Bureau of Public Health, *Annual Report*, 1919 and 1920, pp. 20-21.

⁹ *The Yorkton Press*, November 4, 1919. These are the names recorded, but that energetic committee woman, Mrs. J. T. M. Anderson, should also be mentioned.

the greater care and accuracy given to examining the children: here only one child was found completely free from defect.¹⁰ But behind the statistics in these reports is a story of local activity by the women of the various communities who worked without money but with undefeatable enthusiasm.

I recall the Melville clinic as a masterpiece of co-operative effort. Every organized group of women in the community participated with the exception of the Eastern Star whose constitution forbade formal co-operation. The Town Council gave the use of the very fine Town Hall, not only the auditorium but also many of the offices to be used for special exhibits and for examining rooms. The local doctors, Crosby, Livingstone and Paille, worked untiringly with Dr. Middleton and others from the Department. The school boards, both Public and Separate, the school principals and the teachers, gave wonderful co-operation in permitting the pupils according to grade to attend the lectures given by government doctors and other members of the departmental staff, including Miss Allan, Public Health Nurse. The theatre cancelled all matinees and opened its doors daily morning and afternoon to hundreds of school children for their lectures and films. Evening programs in the Town Hall met with enthusiastic response.

The posters provided by the Department and by the Social Service secretaries played a vital part in the education of the public in matters of both personal and public health. But even more striking than the posters were the mechanical exhibits shown in 1923 for the first time. These are described in the Department of Public Health *Annual Report* for 1923:

"Included in the new models displayed during the year were a model of a slaughter house, constructed to scale; models of a safe and a dangerous dug well; a model illustrating the prevalence of bovine tuberculosis in dairy herds; and a model named, 'The thing that matters most in life,' which consists of four manikins, representing Wealth, Opportunity, Prosperity and Health, each armed with a hammer, testing their strength as they arrive at a striking device. Wealth, Opportunity and Prosperity fail in their efforts to ring the bell, but Health rings the bell each time and demonstrated his ability to secure the best things in life."

Today most children in this province grow up without exposure to the risks which caused so much concern to parents a generation ago. But the present high degree of freedom from fear of disease was not achieved without a struggle in which a host of men and women with enlightened leadership from their Department of Public Health, worked indefatigably to make Saskatchewan a healthier place in which to live.

GERTRUDE S. TELFORD

¹⁰ Saskatchewan, Department of Public Health, *Annual Report*, 1923, pp. 44 ff.

TALES OF WESTERN TRAVELLERS

Daniel Williams Harmon

STUDENTS of history are very considerably indebted to those servants of the great fur companies who faithfully recorded day by day activities in their diaries. These journals frequently contain accurate and unique information on the flora, fauna and topography of the region in which the fur trader lived. As well, interesting sidelights on the operations of the companies together with personal views on the lives and customs of the native inhabitants, find their way into these diaries. The historian thus has at his disposal much of the raw material which is the basis of history.

One of the most noteworthy of all of the fur traders' journals was that kept by Daniel Williams Harmon.¹ Harmon was born in Vermont in 1778. He entered the service of the North-West Company in 1800, and spent the following nineteen years in the North-West. During the whole period of his employment he lived in close contact with the Indians. He travelled widely by water and by land. As a clerk in the Company, then as partner, and finally as superintendent, Harmon came to know the area between the 47th and 58th degrees of North latitude, west of the Great Lakes, as did few other men. Yet Harmon was neither an explorer nor an adventurer; he was a trusted agent of the North-West Company. His *Journal* is of more than usual interest for it is a record of nineteen years of unbroken service in the wilderness. Of particular interest to Saskatchewan readers are those entries which treat of his activities in that part of the west which is now Saskatchewan.

The *Journal* opens on April 29, 1800. Harmon was then a clerk apprenticed for seven years to the North-West Company, "otherwise denominated McTavish, Frobisher & Co." He was one of a brigade travelling to the interior by canoe and had reached La Chine, one day's march from Montreal. Ensuing entries trace the progress of the brigade along the traditional Canadian route—up the Ottawa River, portage to Lake Nipissing, by way of the Great Lakes to Fort William, to Rainy Lake, Lake Winnipeg, Dauphin River, Lake Winnipegosis, and to Swan Lake. This last was the dispersal point for the Swan River department. Harmon proceeded to Alexandria, a fort "built on a small rise of ground, on the bank of the Assiniboine, or Upper Red River, that separates it from a beautiful prairie." He arrived there on October 23rd, 1800.

Harmon spent the first three years of his apprenticeship learning the fur trade business. His sphere of activities was limited to the Swan River area and to the chief company posts therein. There were: Alexandria (on the Assiniboine River, close to where it is crossed by the modern number nine highway north of Canora)², Swan River Fort, about one hundred miles east, at the mouth of

¹ Harmon, Daniel Williams, *A Journal of Voyages and Travels in the Interior of North America*, (Toronto, 1904). This journal was originally revised and published by Daniel Haskel of Burlington, Vermont, in 1820.

² See A. S. Morton, "The Posts of the Fur-Traders on the Upper Assiniboine River," *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, 3rd series, vol. 36, section 11, pp. 101-114.

Swan River, and Bird Mountain, on the Swan River, some fifty miles upstream from Swan River Fort. He was by no means idle during this period for his *Journal* is a record of a busy life spent in the business of acquiring and despatching furs. Through his industry Harmon rose from clerk to become supervisor of all three fur trading posts. During the years 1805 to 1808 Harmon was busy in the Cumberland Department with headquarters at the North-West Company's Cumberland House.³

In 1804 Harmon led a party into what is now central Saskatchewan for the purpose of increasing the fur take of his division. The fur traders set out from Alexandria on February 15th, and proceeded two days' march westward to Lac La Pêche, or Fishing Lake. Here a headquarters was set up by the side of the X.Y. traders.⁴ On February 28th, Harmon set out on a two days' march into the wilderness arriving at Lost Mountain or Hill on March 1st. Having sent back six of his party with sledges loaded with furs he then proceeded westward on foot, accompanied only by an Indian lad, as far as Great Devil's Lake (possibly Last Mountain Lake).⁵ After a short stay at a North-West Company winter camp, Harmon proceeded two days' march further into the plains, arriving at the "river that calls" on March 11th. Here he met with a friendly reception from a band of Indians who "seldom come thus far into the plains, as the part of the country where we now are, belongs to the Rapid Indians."⁶ This was the farthest Harmon penetrated into the plains and his people having returned from the fort, the whole party set off on March 16th with loaded sledges drawn by dogs. They arrived at Alexandria on March 27th.

While any recital of Harmon's journeyings is interesting, these make up but a small part of the *Journal*. Harmon seems to have been more interested in the wild life of the country and in the habits and customs of the Indians than he was in recording distances travelled. His diary is a very personal record of what he ate, how he lived, what he saw and felt.

Food seems to have been of major concern to Harmon during the whole period of his sojourn in the west. An early entry in his *Journal* runs:

This is the first day which I have ever spent, since my infancy, without either bread or biscuit. As a substitute for bread, we now make use of what the natives call *pimican*, which consists of lean meat, dried and pounded fine, and then mixed with melted fat. This compound is put into bags, made of the skins of the buffalo, etc., and when cold, it becomes a solid body. If kept in a dry place, it will continue good for years.⁷

³ *Ibid.*, p. 115. "This fort stands on the north side of . . . Sturgeon Lake." According to the *Journal* Harmon spent the winter of 1805-1806 at South Branch House, about one hundred and twenty miles above the fork.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 80. The North-West Company was at this time in competition with the Hudson's Bay Co., and the X.Y. Co. The history of the Hudson's Bay Co. is well known. The X.Y. Co. was, as Harmon states (p. 15), a firm formed by a number of Montreal and Quebec merchants. The early years of the diary record the bitter hostility on the personal level existing between the North-West Company and the X.Y. organization. Individual relationships between North-West traders and Hudson Bay factors appear to have been friendly if not cordial.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 82, 83.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 89. Harmon here states, "a white man was never before known to penetrate so far."

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

Pimican [pemmican] was indeed a staple food of both Indian and trader in the North-West. It was usually made from buffalo flesh and perhaps for that reason scarcely an entry of the *Journal* in early years but mentions the proximity of buffalo herds. Harmon has a great deal to say of the buffalo. He notes that "the male buffaloe, when fat, will weigh from one thousand to fifteen hundred pounds, and the female, from eight hundred, to a thousand."⁸ He speaks of the countless herds that roamed the open prairie—so numerous that he and his Indian guide feared to lie down at night lest they be trampled to death. He tells how the beasts may be killed with an axe as they stand blinded by sleet and snow. He recounts the havoc wrought among the herds by the perennial prairie fires. And in all his writings he leaves the impression that in mentioning buffalo he is speaking of tomorrow's dinner.

The buffalo was not the only source of food—as a matter-of-fact Harmon preferred moose meat. In writing of the food and fur supply in the area west of Alexandria he has this to report:

The animals in this vicinity are moose, red deer, a species of antelope, grey, black, brown, chocolate coloured and yellowish bears, two species of wolves, wolverines, polecats or skunks, lynxes, kitts, beavers, otters, fishers, martins, minks, badgers, muskrats, and black, silver, cross and red foxes. Of fowls, we have swans, geese, bustards, cranes, cormorants, loons, snipes, several species of ducks, water-hens, pigeons, partridges, pheasants, etc., etc."⁹

While this is a picture of plenty, there was the reverse side. Many times, and particularly in winter, the fur traders and Indians resident near the forts were on the verge of starvation. Harmon notes on January 9th, 1802, that a number of his people sent to Alexandria for meat, "have just returned, without anything. We are, therefore, under the necessity of subsisting on pounded meat, and dried chokecherries." On the following February 7th, he writes: "during the last three days we have subsisted on tallow and dried cherries." On June 23rd he tells of having nothing to eat, "excepting boiled parchment skins." Apparently this last was a protracted fast for on July 2nd Harmon records: "for six days . . . we subsisted at the fort on parchment skins, dogs, herbs and a few small fish." In 1804, while camped beside Fishing Lake, he relates: "for some time after our arrival, we subsisted on rose buds, a kind of food neither very palatable nor nourishing."¹⁰ It seems that the new land offered either feast or famine.¹¹

A surprising thing in all the accounts of food is the fact that very little mention is made of fish. Certainly there would be fish in abundance near the forts, yet, whilst on the prairie, Harmon and his associates apparently only turned to fish as a last resort. Mention is made of fish as food for Indians and dogs but as food for the trader it is spoken of in disparaging terms.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 68. Apparently Harmon tried to supplement the food supply with garden produce, for the entry, July 23, 1802, complains of the depredation of grasshoppers, "flying in such numbers, that they obscure the sun . . . and our potato tops escape not their ravages." Sugar making, also, was an accepted industry in the west [p. 31, 48, 119] but the maple trees were said to be of inferior quality.

While food was of ever-present concern there were other difficulties to be faced by the fur trader. One of these was the problem of transportation, for on cheap transportation depended the profit of the fur merchants. The North-West Company maintained extensive lines of communication stretching from Montreal to the Pacific. A regular schedule of expresses passed over the main transportation routes, supplying the interior posts with goods on the way in and picking up furs on the way out. Harmon writes, January 4th, 1801:

The winter express [passes] by way of Fort des Prairies, thence to English [Churchill] River, and thence directly to Athabasca. [This is the incoming express] and, I am informed, there is an express, which every year leaves Athabasca, in the month of December, and passes through the whole country called the North-West, and in the latter part of March, reaches Sault St. Maries.¹²

The winter express depended on dogs and sleds. A later express, called the summer express, followed familiar river and lake routes broken by frequent portages. Within the area tributary to any fort considerable travelling was done on foot both winter and summer. However the normal mode of travel seems to have been by horse.

The extent of the fur take, the *raison d'être* of the whole company organization, depended to a great extent on good relations with the Indians. Harmon was particularly successful in his handling of natives. In all of the nineteen years' association with Indian tribes across the North-West he records only three occasions when his life was threatened by irate or drunken braves. Harmon was interested in the Indians—perhaps that is why he was so successful in his dealings with them. His comments on Indian habits are pertinent and revealing. While at Alexandria, Harmon noted that:

The Indians who come to this establishment are Crees and Assiniboin. The principal part of the former, generally remain in the woody part of the country, and hunt the moose, elk, beaver, etc., and the latter remain in the large prairies, and hunt buffaloes, wolves, etc.¹³

"Both of them," he comments, "are numerous tribes; and as they often meet and intermarry, their manners and customs are similar; but there is no resemblance in their languages. Both tribes are well with horses. The Assiniboin, however, are, by far, the best horsemen; they never go any distance on foot, and it is generally on horse back, that they kill their game."¹⁴

The accoutrements of white civilization greatly affected Indian customs. Harmon says of the Cree Indians in the Swan River area:

The Indians in this quarter have been so accustomed to use European goods, that it would be with difficulty that they could now obtain a livelihood without them. Especially do they need fire arms, with which to kill their game, and axes, kettles, knives, etc. They have almost lost the use of bows and arrows; and they would find it nearly impossible to cut their wood with implements made of stone or bone.¹⁵

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 73. The trading of such goods to certain tribes seems to have been the cause of Indian wars. Harmon reports that the Rapid Indians of the plains were constantly warring with the Crees and Assiniboin, for, "they say that we furnish the Crees and Assiniboin with what fire arms they want, while they get but few. (p. 51.)"

The white civilization was not wholly beneficial. Running all through the *Journal* are references to the effect of alcohol on the Indians. It was apparently the deliberate policy of the North-Westerners to use cheap liquor as a lever to out trade rival fur traders. Rum was the medium of trade and it seems to have been negotiable everywhere. An entry in his diary on October 25th, 1801, reads:

A large band of Indians have been here, who were continually drinking during the last forty-eight hours. They have now taken their departure; but another band has just arrived, and, therefore, we must pass another night without sleep; for when the natives are at the fort, and have the means of purchasing spirits, they expect to drink both night and day.¹⁶

The Indian chiefs showed great ingenuity in the means they employed to get a store of rum. One of the most telling counters used was the family of adolescent daughters. The chiefs were usually eager to trade a daughter to the white men in return for a store of liquor. Harmon records, August 11th, 1802:

On the ninth instant, a chief among the Crees, came to the fort accompanied by a number of his relations, who appeared very desirous that I should take one of his daughters to remain with me . . . in fact he almost persuaded me to keep her; for I was sure that while I had the daughter, I should not only have the father's furs, but those of all his band.

Harmon stated that, "happily for me, I escaped the snare." However, in 1805, we find this entry for October 10th:

This day, a Canadian's daughter, a girl of about fourteen years of age was offered to me; and after mature consideration, concerning the step which I ought to take, I have finally concluded to accept of her, as it is customary for all gentlemen who remain, for any length of time, in this part of the world, to have a female companion . . . her mother is of the tribe of the Snare Indians, whose country lies along the Rocky Mountain. The girl is said to have a mild disposition and an even temper, which are qualities very necessary to make an agreeable woman, and an affectionate partner.

He was fortunate in his choice for "the mother of his children" accompanied him on all his travels and relations proved extraordinarily happy. He originally intended to leave "my woman," as he called her, with some honest man in the Company's employ when he retired. But with the passing years the ties of affection grew strong, for he took her out with him, married her in due form and spent his last years with her in Vermont.

Harmon left the plains in 1808 to take charge of posts in the Peace River and Rocky Mountain region. His diary thereafter is concerned almost wholly with affairs in that and the Pacific area.¹⁷ It is interesting to learn that he missed the pemmican of the plains and had to acquire a taste for salmon. As food was

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 71. Drunkenness was by no means an Indian monopoly. Harmon reports, p. 73. "This day being Christmas our people have spent it as usual, in drinking and fighting . . . Of all the people in the world, I think the Canadians, [voyageurs] when drunk, are the most disagreeable; for excessive drinking generally causes them to quarrel and fight among themselves. Indeed, I had rather have fifty drunken Indians in the fort, than five drunken Canadians."

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 221-223. Harmon kept in touch with developments in other areas by letter. His remarks here on the Seven Oaks Affair are biased and wholly exonerate the Company from any blame for the incident.

harder to provide, he turned to the growing of grain and vegetables to supplement the provisions of the area. Indeed, there is evidence to show that he was the first farmer in British Columbia.¹⁸ His interest in his surroundings was sustained and his *Journal* deals as fully with the flora and fauna of the mountain region as it does with that of the plains.

In 1819 Harmon retired from service with the North-West Company. His *Journal* gives no reason for retirement though it contains many references to his loneliness in the wilderness. According to his own view he had lived an upright life. While there is a tradition that he was a great swearer,¹⁹ his diary shows him to have had strong religious bent. The last entry in his *Journal* is classic in its simplicity:

Wednesday, August 18th [1819] Fort William. I have at length arrived at headquarters. In coming from New Caledonia to this place, which is a distance of at least three thousand miles, nothing uncommon has occurred. A few days hence, I shall leave this place, to proceed to Canada. As I have already described the country between this and Montreal, I shall here conclude my journal.

JOHN H. ARCHER

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 167. "We have planted our potatoes, and sowed barley, turnips, etc., which are the first that we ever sowed, on the west side of the mountains."

¹⁹ Morton, Arthur, S., *A History of the Canadian West to 1870-1871*, (London, [1937]), p. 622. At the union of the Hudson Bay and North-West Companies in 1821, Harmon was given the position of Chief Trader, but he soon retired with his family to Vermont.

Homesteading at Indian Head¹

MY MOTHER'S experiences of prairie life began when she came with her parents to Indian Head in 1888. She was born at Beach's Corners near Brockville. Her grandfather, Justice Beach, had moved to Indian Head in 1883 and had homesteaded about nine miles south of the town, which at that time consisted of a section-house, Dixon's boarding house, Crawford's store (in a tent), Osment's store where the Indians traded, and a very few houses. In 1887 her grandfather persuaded his son, James Robert Beach, to move west with his wife and family.

My mother and her brother arrived with their parents at Indian Head on January 27th, 1888, about two in the morning, to find the temperature forty degrees below. Her great uncle Enos met them with a sleigh and robes, to take them to her grandfather's farm. They stopped at Louis Arnold's en route to get warmed up and arrived home in time for breakfast. Here they remained until thawing, when her father filed his homestead claim in Regina and built his log house, together with a barn made of poles and straw. The barn was constructed by making an outline or pen of a double row of poles, then filling the space between with straw. The roof was made of poles covered with straw and then poles again to hold the straw down. The log house had one room downstairs and one room upstairs. Upstairs the height of the side walls was the width of one log, or about a foot, and the ceiling slanted up from there. It was possible to stand upright only in the centre of the room. It was nearly two months before the baggage arrived from Brockville. It consisted of a sewing machine, a low sideboard, dishes, clothing and bedding.

There was no school existing within convenient distance, and it was not until mother was eight that Sunny South School was built. Then mother and her brother Clair attended, the two riding one horse. When they came home from school, their task was to bring the cows in from the surrounding prairies, all unfenced. Between the homestead and the U.S. border there were no fences as there was no settlement at all at that time. The milkhouse was a dugout roofed with poles and always cool. To reach it, one had to walk down steps. Inside were shelves with the milk sitting in pans. These pans were skimmed for cream to churn into butter.

After arriving in the west Clair was given a horse, Pet. Pet had been used by Enos Beach in hauling supplies during the Rebellion. She was a big, old mare and of not much use, so when an Indian offered a pony in trade for Pet, it was accepted. Shortly afterwards, while the Indians were camped by Dry Lake, Pet was caught in a bog. They shot her, skinned and ate her, and the next day appeared at my mother's house. Her father was away on the fields and her mother could not understand them. The Indian who had made the trade was

¹ *Editor's Note:* These recollections of Mrs. H. McCorkindale of Indian Head have been provided by her daughter, Mrs. Jean McCorkindale Thomas of Summerside, P.E.I.

a big, ugly, vicious looking man and sat in the woodshed slapping his whip on the floor with a wicked sounding noise. Grandma was frightened and put mother out of a window to run to Kerr's to get someone to come to stay with her. In sign language the Indians pantomined someone lying down, which was the horse dying, and then made gestures to their mouths to show that they had eaten Pet. Grandma understood this to mean that they were hungry and she gave them food, which did not satisfy them. She finally persuaded them to go away and to return another day, which they did when Grandpa was home. He gave them a dog which they desired and it howled all night so they killed it and ate it also. When they came back to visit Grandpa again, Tom MacLean was there. He spoke their language and finally an arrangement was made whereby Grandpa gave them \$2.00 and they were seen no more.

In the fall there were prairie fires to be fought and men would be up night after night ploughing fire guards or placing wet sacks. No one slept at night for fear the fire would come in on them. A prairie fire could sweep up from Montana with nothing to stop it.

Their food was mainly what they could grow on their farm—chickens, turkeys, ducks, pork, beef, eggs, potatoes, turnips, milk, butter—and then there were the wild gooseberries, strawberries, cranberries and saskatoons. It was 1890 before mother saw her first can of salmon—good red salmon, two tins for twenty-five cents! When they received a barrel of apples from the east, then they thought themselves well off indeed. Dried fruits could be bought in town. Their own wheat was taken to the mill in Wolseley to be ground into flour for their own use. Then a mill was later built in Indian Head. The barn was not warm enough to keep calves, so there was no milk during the winter. Consequently, in the fall the milk was poured into pans and frozen, to be kept in the milkhouse and thawed out during the winter as it was needed. Butter was also packed away in the same manner.

Game was much more plentiful then. The children would go to the lakes where the eggs hatched, and would bring home the goslings and raise them as tame geese.

The Anglicans had a small church, St. Chad's, in which services were held once a month, attended by all denominations. Robert Crawford, a Presbyterian storekeeper from Indian Head, would come out to the home of Justice Beach and hold a service there for all the neighbors. The Beaches themselves were Methodists. The downstairs of the home of Justice Beach contained one big room, together with a kitchen which was used only in the summer. Church was held in the main room, planks being put on chairs to form benches.

Their entertainment was limited—picnics and dances in the summer and dances in the winter. The dances were usually held in Justice Beach's home because it had the largest room. Picnics were held at farms, at Squirrel Hills Springs, or at one of the numerous lakes. On July 1st of each year, they all went to Indian Head for the celebrations. When the families attended dances, they had to take all the children with them and put them to sleep in the beds of the home.

The lighting was by candles or coal oil lamps. During the winter, when the roads were impassable, the oil supply often ran out. Then they took a penny or a big button, tied it in a twisted rag and set it in a saucer of grease. The rag formed the wick and the penny balanced it at the bottom. This gave off a terrible smell, but provided a little light.

Grandpa grew wheat, oats, barley and hay. He and his father, Justice, earned the reputation of being excellent sowers. They had grown grain previously in Ontario. When sowing, they carried the grain in a sack suspended from one shoulder, the same hand and arm holding the three-cornered bag open. The other arm flung the grain across the earth. Their grain always grew evenly. At first Justice Beach had used a reaper, which did not tie the grain in bundles, but by the time Grandpa arrived in the west, binders were in common use. The harvesting was done much later in the year, as they grew Red Fife wheat. It was stooked, stacked, and then threshed in a horsepower machine. Six long spokes or tongues ran out from the centre of this machine. A team of horses was hitched to each spoke and they walked around and around, providing the power to drive the thresher. A man stood in the middle to keep the teams going at an even pace.

Grandpa also raised sheep and the wool was carded and spun into yarn for knitting. When she lived in Brockville, Grandma had had her own loom and on coming west she brought blankets which she had woven herself. The loom was not brought with them so cloth was purchased at the store. Grandpa made a coarse loom for her to make carpets which were woven from strips of cloth. Buttoned boots and laced boots were also purchased in town.

Their soap was all made at home. During the winter a barrel was filled with ashes and in the spring it was soaked with water. The liquid which ran off the bottom of the barrel was lye which was collected in a pot and used with grease to make soap.

The lime for plastering, whitewash, etc., was made by gathering limestones—white rocks—into a big hole in the ground. A narrow trench was built leading to the bottom of the hole and a fire built in the trench and pushed under the rocks. Fresh logs and sticks were constantly pushed down the trench to keep the hot fire going. Grandpa, Justice and Great-Uncle Joel usually took shifts as firemen. The fire was kept going for ten days or two weeks and at the end of that time the rocks would have crumbled and the hole would be filled with fine white lime.

There were no roads, and people were in constant danger of getting lost. During the summer there was a well-beaten path, and at night the horses would keep to it if given their head. Grandma always kept a lamp in the window at night in the wintertime in case someone should be lost. One man, Walter Bingham, used to declare that when he was coming home from town that once he got over the hill he knew everything was all right as soon as he saw "Beach's Star."

When more settlers came in, fifteen grain elevators were built in Indian Head and these were busy all the time. Many times Grandpa would leave home at one or two in the morning in order to be early in the line-up for the elevator the next day.

Grandpa sold the farm in 1903 to Americans who were then buying up much Canadian farm property. They lived on the next farm for three years and then he bought a farm twenty miles from Success. After five years there, he had an opportunity to sell the land at a very good profit so he sold out and moved to Elrose.

Here he bought the farm known as Otter Springs, named after Colonel Otter who had led a detachment in the Riel Rebellion. It was said that something worth approximately \$2,000 had been buried on this farm during the Rebellion, and each year a band of Indians would come to the farm and camp there and hunt for the buried treasure. Mother spent a month at this farm, and, with other members of the family, joined the search. Finally the Indians stopped coming and it was thought that they had found what they had been seeking.



A PRAIRIE DAWN—IN SUMMER

A dull grey dawn was followed by a heaven
Of faint blue tint, with pillowy clouds rolled high
Against the concave. Soon the sun, a mass
Of white and dazzling light was seen. Seen! No:
You look'd and turn'd, and blinding shadows played
Before your eyes. For he had stolen behind
Great steely belts of vapour; gave no sign
Save some few yellow-crimson touches near
The horizon pale, which proved no herald rays,
But legacies of his eclipsed glory.
The clouds grew brighter, shone more pearly-white;
The horses stood but half awake, nor fed;
Lazily, languidly they switched their tails.
Up from the prairie rose the myriad songs
Of birds. The bull-frog's plaintive note was heard
In pauses of the various melody.
The long-legged night-hawk ran along the track
And uttered his harsh-grating cry. The air
Was cool and balmy, odorous with scent
Of grass and flower. I sat me down to read
My eyes I raised at intervals to watch
Put on a subtler polish the bright clouds.
Three Indians clad in cast-off clothes of whites,
All lank and dirty, listless, came and sat
A short way off. Towards seven the sun grew hot
And made one long for branching bowery trees,
With their cool shadows and their murmuring leaves.

—From NICHOLAS FLOOD DAVIN's *Eos: An Epic of the Dawn,*
And Other Poems. (Regina, 1889).

The Newspaper Scrapbook

MR. J. NICHOL, of Fort Qu'Appelle, organizer of the Patrons of Industry, was in town last Friday and gave *The Leader* a pleasant call. In conversation with a reporter, Mr. Nichol stated that he had organized sixteen patrons' lodges in the Regina district, with an average membership of about thirty. The names of the lodges are Rose Plain, Boggy Creek, Victoria, Bayswater, Wascana, Lumsden, Longlaketon, Craven, Cottonwood, Fairville, Stony Beach, Stockton, Hednesford, The Hub, Camden, South Regina. Mr. Nichol wished us to correct an impression which appeared to have gone abroad that the order was antagonistic to the merchants and business interests of the country. Patrons were not antagonistic to anybody except monopolies and combines which are sapping the life blood of the country. It is an organization of farmers for mutual protection, instruction and benefit, and that its aims may not be misunderstood, we again publish their platform which appeared in this paper a few weeks ago. It will be seen that many of the planks of the Patrons' platform are on a line with the policy advocated by *The Leader* since 1883. The following is the platform:

1. Maintenance of British connection.
2. The reservation of the public lands for the actual settler.
3. Purity of administration and absolute independence of Parliament.
4. Rigid economy in every department of the public service.
5. Simplification of the laws and a general reduction in the machinery of government.
6. The abolition of the Canadian Senate.
7. A system of civil service reform that will give each county power to appoint or elect county officials paid by them, except county judges.
8. Tariff for revenue only, and so adjusted as to fall as far as possible upon the luxuries and not upon the necessities of life.
9. Reciprocal trade on fair and equitable terms between Canada and the world.
10. Effectual legislation that will protect labour, and the results of labour, from these combinations and monopolies which unduly enhance the price of articles produced by such combination and monopolies.
11. Prohibition of the bonusing of railways by governments as contrary to the public interest.
12. Preparation of the dominion and provincial voters' lists by the municipal officers.
13. Conformity of electoral districts to county boundaries as constituted for municipal purposes, as far as the principle of representation by population will allow.

Mr. Nichol left on Saturday for Moose Jaw to continue the work of organization among the farmers of that district. He wished to thank the press and especially *The Leader* for kind and fair references to his work.

—Supplement to *The Leader* (Regina), March 22, 1894.

A COUNCIL of the United Commercial Travellers was held in the city on Saturday evening for the instituting of a council for Regina.

It was about 9 P.M. when District Deputy Counselor Morgan called the meeting to order. There were present Past Counselor Cox, Bros. Graham, Cooper and Rosebury, of Council No. 154, Winnipeg; M. J. and P. H. Hughes, of Council No. 107, Mason City, Iowa, for the purpose of instituting Regina Council No. 266.

The Regina Council was formally instituted by the District Deputy, and the election of officers proceeded with the following being unanimously elected to the several offices:

Senior Counselor, H. W. Laird; Junior Counselor, M. J. Hughes; Past Counselor, P. Cooper; Secretary-Treasurer, K. W. Ross; Conductor, R. B. Fergusson; Page, P. H. Hughes; Sentinel, J. H. Sheddon.

Executive Committee: H. P. Field, C. F. Macdonald, for a term of one year, and J. A. Benner and N. J. Rutledge for a term of two years.

The Regina Council of the United Commercial Travellers is the only Council of this organization in the territories, and the second one in Canada, the other being the Winnipeg Council. The order is not merely an insurance society like the Commercial Travellers' Mutual Benefit Society, although the providing of accident benefits is one of the Council's objects, but it is a fraternal order, and has large membership in the United States.

—*The Leader* (Regina), June 1, 1904.

A first-class restaurant and dining hall and a good circulating library are amongst the newly established institutions at Prince Albert.

The Saskatchewan Herald (Battleford), February 10, 1879.

THE first Masonic Lodge in the North-West was opened here [Prince Albert] last Friday evening. The Lodge is named "Kinisteno," and hails from the Grand Lodge of Canada. The principal officers are: Captain Chas. F. Young, Worshipful Master; John McKenzie, Senior Warden; George Duck, Junior Warden. It has a membership of about twenty to start with.

The Saskatchewan Herald (Battleford), November 3, 1879.

THE first Grenfell Bonspiel was held at the rink on the 12th and 13th insts., and was in every way a most successful undertaking for such a young club. The ice was in first-class condition, and the roaring game was enthusiastically carried on almost without intermission presenting an animated and lively scene. The greatest interest centred in the finals between Johnston of Qu'Appelle and Sam Edwards of Indian Head for the Grand Challenge Cup, and between the latter and McCarthy of Regina, for the Ben Hur Trophy. The officers of the club deserve the greatest praise for having so successfully and pleasantly carried to a conclusion the programme of the first 'spiel.

The Grenfell Sun, March 19, 1896.

Book Reviews

AGRARIAN SOCIALISM: THE CO-OPERATIVE COMMONWEALTH FEDERATION IN SASKATCHEWAN. A STUDY IN POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY. By S. M. *Lipset*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press [Toronto: Oxford University Press], 1950. Pp. xvii, 315. \$6.00.

As the title implies, Mr. Lipset's book is designed to be an analysis of "agrarian socialism" with particular reference to the C.C.F. He contends that "the theoretical framework within which an author operates will determine in large measure the results that he will obtain," and he announces himself as a "supporter of the democratic socialist ideology," specifically concerned with what he calls the "discrepancy between the ideology and behaviour of most present-day democratic socialist governments." Commencing with this ideological approach, he comes after much theorizing and documenting to the conclusion that "every large scale organization falls victim to the virus of bureaucratic conservatism, and to the fear that a further challenge to the status quo will injure its power and status."

In proceeding to this conclusion, Mr. Lipset consciously strives to consider the social background of the political party (the C.C.F.) which he is studying, relating the activities of the C.C.F. government to the structure of the community within which the movement arose. He develops the theory that the history of North American political class consciousness has been primarily a story of agrarian upheavals, giving historical accounts of such movements as the Green-backers, the Populists, and the Non-Partisan League. He shows that the main support of these movements came from the western agrarian states, and particularly from the Wheat Belt, and that from time to time agrarian leaders made efforts to find labour allies who would support the demands of the farmers in return for rural support of labour's program. Many of the agrarian platforms put forward from time to time in these wheat states contained reforms of a socialistic nature, which sprang not from any doctrinaire concept, but rather as solutions to the actual problems of the wheat economy. "The large measure of 'socialism without doctrine' that can be found in the programs of agrarian political and economic organizations is in many respects more socialistic than the nationalization policies of some explicitly socialist parties." Mr. Lipset argues that the Saskatchewan C.C.F. "follows directly in the tradition of North American socialism."

The author traces the development of farmers' organizations in Saskatchewan by dealing with the development of the Grain Growers' Grain Company, the Saskatchewan Co-operative Elevator Company, the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association, The Farmers' Union, the Wheat Pool, the U.F.C., and eventually the C.C.F. With the coming of the depression, those leaders of the U.F.C. who advocated political action received strong support and the C.C.F. was born. Mr. Lipset's review of this history is worthy of study by every student of this period. He does, however, fall into a rather weaker position as he proceeds to the study of the agrarian movement after it announced itself as being socialist.

One suspects that Mr. Lipset is already beginning to guide his theories toward a predetermined conclusion. He argues that a small group of "old socialists" assumed the leadership of the farm movement about the time of the beginning of the depression, formed a political party, and made it a socialist party. This apparently was easily done because the agrarian movement was "socialism without doctrine" already. Just why it was necessary for a movement already proceeding in the direction of socialism to be "captured" by "old socialists" is something which Mr. Lipset could have explained more fully. It is true that the agrarian movement became consciously socialist with the birth of the C.C.F. But this did not mean that it had yet adequately defined what was meant by socialism. The word has frequently been defined by writers but the truest definition must come from the actual conventions of the people who are putting it into practice in the light of their experiences. Socialists in Saskatchewan like to think that C.C.F. conventions have defined and redefined socialism, arriving at less ambiguity and greater workability with each attempt. Consequently, it can be argued that socialists today are much closer to an understanding of the true meaning of the word, than are those who wrote about socialism ten or twenty or a hundred years ago.

Mr. Lipset, on the other hand, appears to be arguing that the "old socialists" had correctly understood what socialism was, once and for all, and his history of the advance to power of the C.C.F. from its inception up until 1944 treats of its platform as a series of retreats from or advances back to the original conception of socialism as held by the "old socialists," such retreats and advances being the tactics of political expediency. This is certainly introducing a cynical note not justified by the depth of the earlier part of the book. Substantial modifications of the C.C.F. platform did occur as the movement grew from a handful of supporters to become the largest party in percentage of popular participation of any party in North America, but the very fact that the agrarian tends to play down "leadership" and to seek mass participation has led the agrarian socialist to place much more importance on statements from conventions than on ideological treatises by leaders, even though the leaders may be "old socialists."

As an example of political expediency Mr. Lipset discusses certain movements toward a united front of left-wing groups which appeared from time to time in the thirties, and which even include the Conservatives, and suggests that this showed a tendency on the part of the agrarian socialists to compromise their position for the sake of gaining power. Yet this was the period when the popular front came to power in France, and when Cripps and Jennie Lee were expelled from the British Labour Party for advocating similar ideas. It can be argued that support of the coalition idea was compromising socialist principles but it cannot be argued that this support was necessarily typical of agrarian socialism as such. Rather it was typical of the world socialist movement at that particular time.

For the purposes of his discussion, Mr. Lipset defines the ideal socialist society as "an economically equal one with socially co-operative instead of competitive values." "It is not maintained that such a society is necessarily possible, or that the C.C.F. has the power to create it, but rather that a socialist

movement can and should be evaluated on the degree to which its reforms lead to such a society." "The elected reformer must . . . first, make the changes that are necessary to secure the reforms; and second, he must not antagonize the rest of the electorate." In defining the practical limitations on the elected reformer Mr. Lipset probably places too much stress upon the necessity of modifying the proposed reforms in order not to antagonize the majority of the electors. There are many other limitations upon the elected reformer in a provincial government. There are other institutions which determine the direction of policy in addition to the legislature and the government, such as the federal government, municipal and city governments, professional societies, trade unions, Board of Transport Commissioners, co-operatives, the national banking system, etc. The statement that Saskatchewan is an "island of socialism in a sea of capitalism" expresses a greater concern over securing the economic co-operation of the aforementioned institutions, than of maintaining the political support of an electorate.

Mr. Lipset argues that pressure groups continue to play their usual role even after the election of such a government as the C.C.F., with the difference that the general tendency is to strengthen the more progressive forces. He therefore argues that those portions of C.C.F. ideology which are strongly backed by organized pressure groups have been more quickly and adequately enacted. The educational system is being reformed quantitatively in accordance with the desires of the organized teachers and farmers. "The powerful co-operative movement received a government department of co-operatives. The organized farmers' movement secured government protection for land ownership and support in gaining higher prices. The trade unions were given what they considered to be the best labour legislation on the North American continent. The rural demand for state medicine is being fulfilled in a way that meets with the approval of the medical profession." Mr. Lipset seems to feel that a transition to socialism to be genuine should be in accordance with a predetermined plan designed to implement his definition of socialism. He wonders if the question of how to reconcile the need for such a change with the necessity of keeping democratic procedures may not be "one of the most crucial issues of our age."

In reaching this conclusion, Mr. Lipset has overlooked a number of important factors. If he had properly considered all of these factors and had remained in Saskatchewan for a longer period of time, it is possible that he would have reached an exactly contrary conclusion. The entering by the government into the field of insurance with the consequent social objectives in provincial investment policy was opposed more violently than any other project of the provincial government, for this threatens the structure of capitalist society to a greater degree than many of the other reforms. This economic policy is limited in scope by the jurisdiction of the province but has not been slowed down by pressure groups in the province, nor by fear of opposition by the electorate. Yet Mr. Lipset dwells on the insurance office chiefly to use it as an example to argue that a basic conflict exists between workers and management in a socialist economy. This is an argument based upon the entirely unsupported and incorrect statement that the government had even refused to discuss a contract with the employees of the insurance office until after they went on strike.

Dealing with the problem of governmental bureaucracy, Mr. Lipset argues that "administrative functions cannot be separated from policy making power," "that the goals and values of the Civil Service are often . . . as responsible for state policy as those of the ruling political party." He argues that the upper ranks of the civil service may operate to prevent policy change by their tendency to shun new responsibility, by their relationship as a class to the upper middle class in the community, by their failure to innovate in developing and extending new policies, and by their influence upon their respective ministers, until the influence of the permanent officials becomes more important with the minister than even that of his cabinet colleagues, and the "radical becomes proud of his conservatism." In all of his writing on this subject there is some truth. He does, however, overlook the fact that in many cases civil servants will have a strong desire to seek new responsibility and new tasks in accordance with the work for which they are particularly trained. Social Welfare officials try to develop the most modern and up-to-date concepts of social welfare. Power Corporation officials are anxious to extend power lines, Insurance Office staff want to see their office grow, etc. Each of these groups waits only for the government to give them the "go-ahead signal," in accordance with the government's conception of how far the public is prepared to accept new ventures. Indeed the problem of the cabinet minister supervising staff today is that of preventing too much "empire building" rather than too much "conservatism." Finally, while tenure of office may have mellowed the radicalism of "old socialists," the feeling of progress is permeating the civil service. While the drastic house-cleaning advocated by some as reported in the book, has not taken place in civil service personnel, the normal rate of turnover of staff and the knowledge that Saskatchewan is a happy place for a conscientious administrator to work is leading in the course of time to a civil service that is a stimulant to social progress rather than a deterrent as Mr. Lipset seems to fear.

There is much of interest and value in the historical review and the theoretical analysis contained in *Agrarian Socialism*, but at the same time one may arrive at contrary and much less pessimistic conclusions.

O. W. VALLEAU

HOME IS THE STRANGER. By Edward A. McCourt. Toronto: The MacMillan Co. Ltd., 1950. Pp. 280. \$3.00.

A GOOD tale, well told, is Edward McCourt's latest novel, *Home is the Stranger*. It tells the story of an Irish war bride, who comes to the prairies to make her home on her husband's Saskatchewan farm. The book presents, incidentally, an excellent picture of life on a modern Saskatchewan farm, as seen through the eyes of Norah, the heroine.

The story is Norah's entirely, to the point where the other characters remain shadowy and indistinct. Norah is what her aunt called "ingrown," preoccupied with her own thoughts and emotions, and she has lived most of her life in fear and loneliness. She was brought up by a prim and unloving aunt, in an

ancient Irish mansion grim and ghost ridden. Her father, afraid of life and fortifying his shrinking spirit with generous amounts of alcohol, offered neither financial nor moral support. Norah is driven precipitately into the arms of Jim Armstrong, a Canadian airman, by a series of wartime events. She arrives in Canada after the war, accompanied by her two-year-old son, Phillip, to join her husband and to find, at last, a refuge from fear and insecurity.

Seen through Norah's eyes, the commonplaces of farm life in Saskatchewan are worthy of comment. During the spring rush her husband works early and late, with an intensity that leaves him no time for recreation or pleasure. Even love-making, she learns with mild chagrin, must wait its turn. The only break in the incessant round of work is the small town sports day. Norah's experiences during that day will bring a sympathetic smile to the lips of prairie dwellers. The sticky, oppressive heat; the hot dusty wind; the semicircle of parked cars around the ball diamond and the endless procession of visiting neighbour women, are familiar in rural Saskatchewan.

In the background is Brian Malory, exciting and not quite respectable. Norah alternately leads him on and repulses him, unsure both of him and of herself. The situation is brought to a head during the winter, when a crippling blizzard strikes the country during Jim's enforced absence from home. Norah, terrified by two days of loneliness in the storm, accepts Brian as her lover when he refuses to remain in the house on any other terms. Her son Phillip meets his death, as an indirect result of this escapade, and Norah is plunged into a mental chaos which leads her to attempt suicide. Only her husband's understanding and care save her.

Through remorse and sorrow and despair, Norah eventually comes to realize that her husband's love for her is the one constant value in her insecure world. Since he is at home on the prairies, that is where she, too, belongs. Resolutely she puts behind her her dream of life in a less austere spot. The stranger, at last, is at home on the prairies.

The tale is told, perhaps, somewhat too much from Norah's point of view. Every thought, every action, every scene is presented through her, and Norah is more given to speculation about her own mental processes than to the study of others. As a result, Norah's is the only character that is clear cut. Brian, the colorful and unpredictable, emerges as an understandable character only toward the end of the book. The stormy and tempestuous Gail Anderson, whom Norah sees as a rival, also takes shape as the story draws to a close, losing in the process most of the exotic elements that have made her interesting. Norah's husband, Jim, strangely enough, remains the most nebulous of the principal characters. Throughout the story he is there in the background, typifying the young Saskatchewan farmer. Slow, solid and dependable in some instances, understanding almost to the point of being clairvoyant in others, he fails to assume the definite characteristics of an individual.

Norah herself is a heroine who can hardly be admired, though she may rouse the reader to sympathy. Her every significant action is motivated by fear, as she herself realizes. It is a fear which she eventually resigns herself to, recognizing it as a part of her character. The final proof of weakness and instability comes

when Norah unloads the whole burden of her guilt and remorse on her long-suffering husband, and then attempts to commit suicide. Pity for her we must feel, for she is too essentially weak to meet even the minor crises of her life, but there is little in her to admire.

Norah herself achieves her one triumph at the book's conclusion, when she deliberately turns her back on the hills and mountains and lush green meadows for which she longs, to make her home on the prairies where Jim belongs. Throughout the novel, however, Norah has passed from one mental and moral triumph to another, assuring herself each time that now, at last, she is in control of herself. But time after time, at the slightest pressure, her assurance crumbles. The reader may be pardoned, perhaps, for wondering if this final triumph will be more permanent than those which preceded it.

The picture of Saskatchewan prairie life is honest and accurate, and will be enjoyed by those who know Saskatchewan. Always it is seen from the point of view of the outsider, through Norah's eyes, and there is little attempt to interpret the country as it appears to those native to it. Only occasionally Norah ponders a remark dropped by Jim, or by Gail Anderson. The suggestion repeatedly appears that the prairie is for simple, unimaginative folk, and not for high strung imaginative people like Norah. But if the author intended to suggest that Norah was crushed by the austerities of the bleak country, the events of the story hardly bear him out. Norah succumbed, not to the prairie, but to weaknesses within herself. Her tragedy was that she was unable to meet any crisis, and crises in the form of hurricanes, blizzards, floods or fires may occur in any country.

Whatever criticism the reader may have of the book and its characters, he will find the novel free of the inaccuracies and ineptitudes which mar most prairie novels. The author writes with assurance and ease, and his tale is readable and entertaining. It is only in retrospect that criticisms of plot or characterization arise. Reading the book for the first time one is too engrossed with the action of the story to be critical.

SHIRLEY I. PAUSTIAN

Notes and Correspondence

THE Historical Society of Montana at Helena has begun the publication of *The Montana Magazine of History*, a quarterly journal "designed to preserve, to publish and to promote interest in, the history of Montana." The first number (January, 1951) includes an article on "The Central Montana Vigilante Raids of 1884," which discusses the circumstances surrounding the killing of between 15 and 18 horse thieves in raids organized by individual ranchers with the support of the Stockmen's Association of Montana. Some of the horses recovered in these raids had been stolen from the North-West Mounted Police.

The local history contest sponsored by the North-West Mounted Police Museum of Battleford was won by the pupils of Cut Knife High School. Forty-three local histories were entered in the contest.

Mr. Bruce Peel, M.A., B.L.S., has accepted the position of head cataloguer in the library of the University of Alberta at Edmonton. Mr. Peel has been a frequent contributor to *Saskatchewan History* and a member of the Editorial Committee. We extend good wishes to Mr. Peel and hope that he will be able to continue to contribute to the pages of this magazine.

A biographical sketch of Samuel Edmour St. Onge Chapleau (1839-1921), Sheriff of the North-West Territories, written by Senator Norman Lambert, appears in the March 31st issue of *The Ottawa Journal*. Sheriff Chapleau, a French Canadian, was a veteran of the American Civil War. In his capacity as Sheriff at Regina he presided over the execution of Louis Riel. "He always thought," Senator Lambert writes, "that Riel should have been committed to an asylum, and it was with great reluctance that he had to order his execution."

Contributors

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SHIRLEY I. PAUSTIAN is a graduate of the University of Saskatchewan and has been a member of the staff of *The Leader-Post*.

Editorial Note:

Readers of *Saskatchewan History* may be interested to know that contributors to this magazine are not paid for their articles and that the cost of printing is borne in part by a subsidy from the Saskatchewan Archives Board. Our readers can assist this publication by making it known to their friends and by becoming sustaining subscribers at a rate of \$5.00 per year.

NOTICE

Many of the articles which appear in *Saskatchewan History* are based on documents in the Office of the Saskatchewan Archives, University of Saskatchewan, and in the archives collection relating to Regina and district which is maintained in the Legislative Library. The Provincial Archivist is anxious to augment both these collections with letters, diaries, reminiscences, photographs, and records of all types of organizations and businesses. Readers of this magazine are urged to communicate with the Provincial Archivist if they possess or know the whereabouts of materials which may be donated, or borrowed for microfilming.

